

**NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**

**DAILY HANSARD**

**THIRD MEETING – EIGHTH SESSION**

**FRIDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2007**

Prayers.

**ATTENDANCE**

At prayers all were present with the exception of the Minister for Finance & Treasury, Justice & Legal Affairs, Mines & Energy, Communication, Aviation & Meteorology, Provincial Government & Constituency Development, and the members for West Guadalcanal and North Vella La Vella.

**STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT  
BUSINESS**

**MOTIONS**

**Motion No 2**

**Hon Oti:** Point of Order, Mr Speaker. I would like to get your ruling by putting an objection to this motion on the following basis.

Mr Speaker, as presently formulated, the substantive motion proposed by the Leader of Opposition is inadmissible and non debatable. Objection is taken to the form and substance of the proposed motion on the basis that it is one which infringes or the debate on which is likely to infringe on any of the provisions of these Orders, particularly Standing Order 27(3)(a) taken together with Standing Order 22(1)(g) in reference to a case that is still before the Courts in relation to the charge on the Minister for Commerce in relation to this particular case. On that basis and also contrary to the Constitution and Standing Order 27(3)(b), and thirdly it is framed in terms which are in consistent with the dignity of Parliament under Standing Order 27(3)(e).

Those are the basis I would like to object to the motion being tabled.

**Mr Speaker:** The issue over matters before the courts, I can quite understand that. May be the Hon Attorney General could help us with the fact that the question may be contrary to the constitution.

**Attorney General:** Mr Speaker, the matter in relation to the Minister of Commerce is still pending approval by the Courts and for that matter ....

**Mr Speaker:** I am particularly interested in the constitutional aspects of section 27(3)(b), which particular part of the Constitution?

**Attorney General:** In relation section 27(3)(b) on the issue of national security – it is an issue of national security in which at this moment ...

**Mr Fono:** Point of Order. Mr Speaker, there will be no mention whatsoever on the case before the courts in relation to the Minister of Commerce in this motion

**Hon Oti:** You cannot control statements from Members of Parliament.

**Mr Fono:** Point of Order. I am still speaking, Mr Speaker, he will have his turn. It shows clearly the Government hiding something in not wanting this House to table this motion.

**Mr Speaker:** The extent of inquiry in terms of the specific cases that are before the Court is quite unknown to the Parliament. We do not really know the extent of the investigation whether it actually covers this particular case or whether it simply covers the entry of this particular plane. I think the enquiry is simply

interested in how this transportation arrived in Solomon Islands, and it is not specifically referring to this particular Minister or a particular case.

**Hon Oti:** Point of Order! In fact that is exactly the point. We would even be preempting the outcome of the PNG Defense Board of Inquiry, which is within PNG. What jurisdiction do you have in Solomon Islands to start to delve into a matter that is extra-territorial to Solomon Islands?

**Mr Haomae:** Point of Order! The enquiry being put in place by the sovereign state of PNG would not be completed if they do not come to Solomon Islands. So to assist the sovereign government, the sovereign state of PNG, I think this motion is just straightforward.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs seems to imply an insult to the intelligence of honorable Members of Parliament by assuming that in debating this motion we will go astray. I do not subscribe to that.

**Hon Oti:** Point of Order! Neither do I subscribe to it either except that under international law unless there is a treaty between the two countries that allows this, and it was on the basis of that, that PNG was also saying that that the Board of Inquiry cannot apply the laws of PNG extra-territorially without a treaty between Solomon Islands and PNG to allow for that.

**Mr Speaker:** I think the honorable House also knows that the motion is just a general intention and it does not bind the government to take actions. So even if the motion is debated it will be debated subject to those kinds of legal constitutional situations.

**Hon Sanga:** Point of Order! If that is the proposition then the question is what message are we conveying to the public? Are we confusing the public further?

**Mr Fono:** Transparency. What is there to hide?

**Mr Speaker:** I think the important point is the constitutional part of it, I did not hear that AG.

The importance of the constitutional part of it, whether it is contradictory to the constitution, is what I am very interested in. I wonder if you can help us out.

**Attorney General:** Section one (1) of the Constitution clearly states that the Solomon Islands is a sovereign democratic state and the nature of the motion will impinge on the sovereignty of this country.

**Mr Speaker:** With my view that a motion is just a general intention, it does not bind the government. May be we should allow it to be debated and of course the government has the right to oppose it.

**Mr Fono:** Thank you for your ruling, Mr Speaker. If the government side has the answers then explain it to this side of the House during the debate. I expect the nation to know why you stop it. Sovereignty itself is not the answer. When the plane came over it also breaks our sovereignty but why is there no diplomatic protest from the government.

**Mr Speaker:** Are you debating your motion honorable Member?

**Mr Fono:** It is the pretext of the motion, Mr Speaker, and with your permission, Mr Speaker, I rise to move the motion standing in my name in today's Order Paper which reads:

*That Solomon Islands Government allows the Papua New Guinea Defense Board of Inquiry to enter Solomon Islands for the purpose of its inquiry.*

Mr Speaker, this is a very important motion. It is important because Solomon Islands through the Government is partly responsible directly or indirectly for the continuing nature of the problem that has given rise to the reasons for the setting up of the PNG Defense Force Board of Inquiry.

Mr Speaker, the questioning of the actions or the inactions of certain senior PNG Officials has necessitated this enquiry. The subject of the inquiry which led to the establishment of the PNG Defense Force Board of Inquiry rests partly on the Solomon Islands

Government. The person concern is still in Solomon Islands, as we all know, and our government still harbors this person at the expense of Solomon Islands taxpayers. It is because of an obligation this government alleges to have to this person for whatever reasons, for whatever explanations or under what circumstances, is difficult to fathom.

I am saying this because the employing agency, the Public Service Commission has suspended this person's appointment, but not withstanding the Prime Minister and his Government insists they are still obligated to this person.

Mr Speaker, because the person who is part of the subject of the PNG Defense Force Board of Inquiry is still here in the country, it is logical, it is expected and it is reasonable to conclude that the Inquiry will cross over our common borders.

Mr Speaker, the Inquiry should cross over borders because certain Solomon Islands officials were also involved. The Inquiry ought to cross over because certain officials in the Prime Minister's Office, our highest esteemed office of land were part of this clandestine escape.

Mr Speaker, you will agree with me that officers from this respected Office such as the Prime Minister's Office are expected to hold and exhibit high standards. These standards are made stronger and are worthy of our respect when they are supported by the law, short of such standards anyone can change these standard at any time to suit their own ends.

No, Mr Speaker, we want people to respect our laws. We want people to respect our country - the much talked about sovereignty that we preach was breached when this plane intruded into our airspace.

We, the people of Solomon Islands but most of all, want people especially our neighbors, in this case PNG to respect us. That is why we are saying, come and complete your inquiry here in the country. The person concern is here, the officials in question are here and we are not hiding anything, we are a responsible government. We govern and we are governing, come and we will support you. We talk so much about transparency and accountability, so why

do we not allow this Board of Inquiry to come to Solomon Islands to complete its work.

Mr Speaker, our seriousness needs to show we are a responsible government, we are good neighborly government is to show this when it matters. There is no better time or better way to demonstrate this than to allow the PNG Defense Board of Inquiry to complete its work in this country.

In doing so, we are not helping PNG only but we are in fact doing a favor to ourselves. We are showing our neighbor PNG that we are kind to them, that we are wantoks and most of all we are showing that we are kind to ourselves.

Sir, I will outline some of the reasons why I believe this Board of Inquiry should come to Solomon Islands to complete its work.

First, Mr Speaker, it is shows that we support law and order, not only in PNG but in SI. The PNG Defense Board of Inquiry is part of the operation of law and order in PNG. We want to support that institution in its work. This Inquiry involves very senior officials in the PNG Government. We cannot do better than help our neighbor, our Melanesian neighbor in this inquiry for them to know exactly who was involved in getting this person out from PNG and landed him in SI.

The second reason is that it will enhance the mutual cooperation and respect between our Melanesian neighbors. Mr Speaker, lest we forget PNG is our neighbor. Neighbors need good neighborly relations and relationships can be improved. This is one of the rare times that we demonstrate we want to improve our relationship with PNG.

In doing so, Mr Speaker, we will also build up and better the mutual trust between our two countries. It is expected of SI to support PNG, our neighbor as has always been the case not only in the Melanesian Spearhead Group sub regional grouping but also in the Forum. Being members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group of countries, we should allow this Board to come to Honiara to complete its investigations. It will, of course create precedence that if in future if there is a need for SI to carry out any investigations in PNG, they will permit us to do so.

Thirdly, Mr Speaker, to clear SI officials and officers who are also implicated and also to clear the good name of our government and the Prime Minister and my good friend the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who are also implicated as alleged. So the Board of Inquiry would clear their names off.

Sir, the escape of the designated suspended Attorney General from the SI High Commission Office in Port Moresby, not only questions the involvement of the PNG officials but also our government officials. Does that not speak well of the SI High Commission Office in PNG? But because of diplomatic immunity the whole saga shows that there are SI officers both in Port Moresby as well as in Honiara who all along knew about what was going on during that time. Therefore, we should not appear to create a situation of suspicion of alleged criminality among our respected offices and senior government officials.

To clear their names we should allow the Inquiry to come into the country to complete its job. I think the people need a balance view of the situation in order, as I have said, to clear allegations and rumors that are spreading that the government has a part in that whole saga.

Fourthly, Mr Speaker, it raises serious domestic and international issues. The escape of the designated Attorney General from PNG to SI also raises serious national and international issues. It has caused enormous damage in terms of PNG relations with its close neighbor and their biggest aid donor – Australia. We want the Inquiry to carry out work in Solomon Islands because we want to assist our neighbors Papua New Guinea and also Australia in order to mend our international relations with Australia. This is the way forward as this side of the House sees it because it is almost four to five months but we have not attempted to mend this relationship that we have with our neighbor Australia.

Mr Speaker, the question is when that plane landed, the Foreign Minister should inform the House why there was no diplomatic protest to Papua New Guinea if we do not know why that plane came. If that plane has no permission, it intruded into our airspace why was there no protest note, a diplomatic protest note to Papua New Guinea.

We need to have an explanation on that, not only for this floor of Parliament to know but the whole nation to know. In any normal situation there should have been a diplomatic protest note. Why didn't the Foreign Minister issue any protest note? Why was he so silent since October 10 up until now? Why Mr Speaker?

**Mr Darcy:** Point of Order, Mr Speaker. Which particular note is the Leader of Opposition raising? If you look at Standing Order 36(8) .....

**Mr Fono:** Point of Order Mr Speaker, we have gone through that.

**Hon Darcy:** Standing order 36(8) says that the conduct of any Ministers shall not be raised in any debate in any motion.

**Mr Fono:** So what is Parliament for?

**Hon Darcy:** What the Minister of Foreign Affairs has done in terms of protesting to the PNG Authority is not a matter for you to raise in this House of Parliament. You should just justify why you are raising this motion. That is what you should be justifying.

I still fail to see he is going to justify it because in terms of Order 27(3)(f) that if it contains or implies allegations within the opinion of, Mr Speaker, you should have rejected this motion. There are certain allegations made here that you have not justified.

**Mr Fono:** We want the truth to be unveiled.

**Mr Speaker:** Could we find out whether the Minister of Finance has finished his point of order.

**Hon Darcy:** Mr Speaker, I am just raising the point that he is raising some allegations against Ministers or against the government that has not been substantiated in terms of standing order 27(3)(f), and I would presume, Mr Speaker, that

**Mr Fono (interjecting):** The truth still remains.

**Mr Speaker:** The Minister and all Members of Parliament on the floor of Parliament have the right to respond to whatever statements they might think is an allegation for clarification. So you have equal opportunity to explain yourselves.

**Hon Oti:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Whilst we have equal opportunity I would just like at the outset guide the Honorable Leader of Opposition to keep on track without continuing to refer to no diplomatic protest.

**Mr Fono** (*interjecting*): that is part of the motion.

**Hon Oti:** I know it is part of the motion. No, but because you continue to go into that when in fact you have not found out exactly what action has been taken, so you are misleading the public, by admitting that you have not known whereas I can tell you now and then it will stop you from making reference to the protests from the government.

**Mr Fono:** Point of Order, Mr Speaker.

**Hon Oti:** Point of Order Mr Speaker, I have not finished. Thank you Leader of Opposition. I am just trying to guide you back into the debate and stop making reference to no diplomatic protest from here. A note was issued, Note Verbal No. 26/06 on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2006.

**Sir Kemakeza:** When you reply you can say that.

**Mr Speaker:** May be I should clarify that you have ample time to make that clarification during your reply. So do not interfere unnecessarily with the one is talking.

**Mr Fono:** I hope we are mature enough. Although there are provisions the motion is just straightforward. The Ministers should have their turn to reply so that not only this House but the whole nation knows that there is nothing to hide. Why are we so furious about making point of orders when I am still introducing the motion?

Thank you, Mr Speaker for your ruling. The fifth reason and my final reason is that

Solomon Islands people and the whole nation needs to know full information disclosure if there is nothing to hide. As I have said the government preaches transparency and accountability and responsibility so they need to tell the nation what has happened.

Sir, since October 2006 our people have been raising many questions on this matter. Since then most of the answers given were either partial, half cooked or outright untruths. Sir, members of the public in Solomon Islands have the right to know and receive full information on the conduct of their government on such a very important matter. It has been the practice of governments particularly this government to shovel issues under the carpet and ride rough shod over our people. In so doing, this government has engaged so many detractors to do just that. This is a government that does not want to be questioned. Sir, despite this the questions keep coming. There is talk on the streets why the government is not coming out to tell the truth to this nation.

Mr Speaker, since October 2006 the Moti Affair is not just a government to government issue. Many Solomon Islanders have been questioning this. When I went home village people are questioning and even people in Auki what is so important about this suspended Attorney General that government is not releasing him. These are the very questions. Even the landowners in Munda who were directly affected have questioned this. They have demanded this government to account, they have demanded \$10million compensation for the plane having landed on their land, and may be in order to keep them out of that demand we are employing now the acting Attorney General who is from Munda so that keep quite a bit.

Mr Speaker, this is not a pity issue. This is very serious. This is an issue that will cost us more than this \$10million demand that the good people of Munda are now demanding.

Sir, for the above reasons and more I feel Parliament as the supreme body of this land must deliberate and debate this issue. This matter can no longer be taken lightly as it is an issue that will affect our relationship with Papua New Guinea as well as Australia as we are now continuing to experience, not only now but into the future.

Mr Speaker, as I have said this is a very serious motion, and a motion that we need to address seriously. This is a motion that impinges on our diplomatic relations with Papua New Guinea and Australia. It is a motion that will set trench for our relationship with Australia. This is a motion that will show we have respect for the practices and values of our democratic principles, and law and order of this country. This is a motion that will show that this particular Parliament, this House has very responsible leaders on this land. It is responsible because this Parliament acts reasonably. Therefore, this is a motion that demonstrates no less from you and me in this House to seriously debate this motion.

With this, Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

*(The motion is open for debate)*

**Sir KEMAKEZA:** Mr Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for moving this motion, and over and above, Mr Speaker, I congratulate you for your excellent decision this morning despite objections from my very good friend, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and also with advice from the learned Attorney General but you have made a very excellent decision.

Mr Speaker, this motion is supposed not to end up on this floor of Parliament. It seems we are wasting Parliament's time and the time of the people of this country by debating this motion. But let us go back to the records to see why this motion comes about. I have no personal grudges against the principle of this circle, my friend Julian Moti affairs. He is my personal friend,

**Mr Speaker:** No mention of names please

**Sir Kemakeza:** I said affairs. I also have big respect on the government, a God fearing government. There are also a lot of bishops, pastors, deacons and priests and whatever titles you like on that side. They should have made a clear decision in the first place.

This issue is dragging this country on to this floor of parliament. This issue was discussed at the Forum. This issue was discussed internationally. This issue is

discussed in Solomon Islands. It is an issue that expelled one of our High Commissioners. It is an issue that expelled the Commissioner of Police. It is an issue that also expelled our Attorney General. It is an issue that has brought cases against some of the Ministers. Some of us have been victims, which made me begin to wonder.

Last night, Mr Speaker, for the information of other honorable Members I listened to the radio and there was great disappointed by the Chairman of this Board of Inquiry in Papua New Guinea because of the action of the government. He is starting to question the action of the government. He is asking why the Solomon Islands Government stopped the Board from coming over to make enquiries. That is what I heard last night.

Last night too, Mr Speaker, I heard the trade unions coming up. All of us 50 Members of Parliament have a sheet of paper in front of us on this issue or may be another issue. So it is already dragging Solomon Islands and the public to a situation where there will be no u-turn whether you like it or not. What is so special about this issue that we are wasting our time on this floor of Parliament to discuss an issue, a petty issue that should have been settled once and for all?

This Parliament should be talking about the roads and wharves of Savo/Russells, the shipping, the clinics, the schools and also talk about land reform and other legislations that are important to the people of this country. That is what we should be discussing here, and not this motion if at all this God fearing government in its right sense and right thinking had settled this issue once and for all.

If we are not careful, Mr Speaker, this issue alone, this petty issue is going to burn up this country. Let me warn you, Mr Speaker. Therefore, we must sit down and consider this issue very carefully. Not only that but it is also a test to the 50 Members of Parliament in this country as well.

Are we representing our people or representing only one person? I challenge all Members of Parliament this morning whether we are representing our people or representing only one person, which is already destroying the good image of this country both at home and

abroad, in the many international organizations. Let us all think independently and represent our people and protect the sovereignty that we always preach about.

Mr Speaker, this is not something that we should talk about this time. We should be talking the airfield at Temotu, if at all it is for discussion. So it is a test.

Sir, we in here are discussing a sovereign issue of another country with another sovereign country and one government with another government. The government that we would like to discuss with is a government that can hear us when we talk on this side, as it is on the other side of our border, it is a government on our bedside, and it is Papua New Guinea. They come to fish on our side and we go fishing on their side.

This government is a member of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, it is a member of the Pacific Islands Forum, it is a member of the Commonwealth and a member of the United Nations. Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea have also signed a special treaty. The Prime Minister knows this very well. I signed that treaty in Goroka on behalf of the Government and people of Solomon Islands.

The government must understand that it has an international and regional obligation to do otherwise; otherwise you are in breach of the provisions and protocols when dealing with such an issue like this when dealing with one country to another. We are starting to fiddle around with fire.

We have already have differences with our biggest friend - Australia, now Papua New Guinea, which is the biggest Melanesian country is being dragged in and sooner or later all other Pacific Islands will be coming in, sooner or later we will be expelled from the Commonwealth, and the list goes on and on, and this is if we are not careful. That is why I said that we are dealing with fire. Why do my very best friends, the bishops and pastors on the other side of this God fear government, not making the right decision? Please, I urge you to make the right decision so that this issue is done away with? What is so special about this issue?

Mr Speaker, I am starting to question you. Therefore, it is a challenge to us 50 Members of this House. Our people would like

this inquiry to go ahead. The Chairman of the Board of Inquiry in PNG is starting to question this government, and is also appealing to the people of Solomon Islands who might know any story about this issue to write to him in Papua New Guinea. Is that how we treat our neighbor?

No, Mr Speaker, I have due respect for the Minister of Foreign of Affairs who in fact diplomatic relations is his profession, but I am starting to question his profession.

*(laughter)*

I am honest. I start to wonder whether that is his real profession or I am much better than him. But I have big respect for him. He is a good foreign affairs ambassador.

That is my contribution to this motion. I want to challenge the 50 Members of Parliament to allow the Inquiry to come into the country as it is the request of our people.

I know the government has the number and therefore it can defeat this motion but you cannot defeat what I am saying here on the floor of Parliament because it is already heard by the people of this country whether you like it or not. Listen in and know that this is a matter that is not supposed to be brought to the floor of this House. It is an issue that has been mishandled by this government. That is the message. The whole country suffers just for the sake of one person. That is the true message. And the question is, what is so special about this person that you destroy the good image of this country. What is so special about this person that it drags every people of this country to a discussion forum, and the trade unions are moving in?

I challenge the 50 Members to support the MP for Central Kwara'ae, the Leader of Opposition. With that, Mr Speaker, I support the motion.

**Mr HUNIEHU:** Mr Speaker, I just want to briefly contribute to the debate of this motion. This motion was tabled in this Parliament with political acrimony, and I should not be part of it. I think this motion has been tabled in this Parliament because of my belief that the government of the day has been interfering with the work of the judiciary in this country. I have always from the beginning maintained the fact

that when this government took over it started developing a poor working relationship with the judiciary of this country.

This government is made up of three functions. The judiciary should be left an independent entity, the administration has enough work to do there, the parliament passes laws, and we hope that by administering the laws the government of the day respects the laws and the government of the day respects the independence of the judiciary.

I am talking about an issue that is very fundamental. If this government continues to interfere with the work of the judiciary, more motions of this nature will be tabled in this Parliament, and it must be this Parliament that rectifies this issue.

**Hon Sanga:** Point of order, Mr Speaker. The MP for East Are Are continues to refer to the judiciary of this country. I think it should be pointed out that this inquiry is not part of the Solomon Islands Judiciary. It is an independent inquiry under the laws of Papua New Guinea and therefore should not be confused with the courts of this country. Thank you.

**Mr Huniehu:** Mr Speaker, I could not understand why the Minister is raising that. This is part and parcel of a regional judicial issue, and we must address it.

Mr Speaker, I think the judiciary's opinion must be the finality in this case – the Judiciary in Solomon Islands. But as I understand it, the government of the day was interfering with decisions. The Minister of Foreign Affairs for example flew to Papua New Guinea may be to advise Papua New Guinea not to go ahead with the trip to Solomon Islands. We cannot deny that this is part of the judicial process.

**Mr Speaker:** Honorable Member for East Are Are, I think hypothetical comments that cannot be substantiated cannot be made.

**Hon Darcy:** Point of order, Mr Speaker, that is exactly what I was referring to earlier. I was referring to Standing Order 36(8) that the conduct of any ministers cannot be raised in any debate under Standing Order 36(8), and he is

referring to the lawful conduct of the Minister of Foreign Affairs going to Papua New Guinea to talk to the Government of Papua New Guinea on a bilateral basis. Why should he speculate something that is totally outside of that mission?

**Mr Speaker:** Standing order 36(8) refers to the personal conduct of these various offices that are mentioned. His official conduct can be questioned.

**Mr Huniehu:** Mr Speaker, I want a healthy debate on this issue in this Parliament so we should stop interjecting Members of Parliament who contribute to a motion rightfully allowed to be tabled in this Parliament.

I am making a point, Mr Speaker, that there are three functions of the government, and it is my belief this government is interfering with the work of the judiciary. That is my justification, and the reason why I am dwelling on that very point.

If we look at this issue very carefully, Mr Speaker, it talks about a matter before the court. According to information available to some of us, Mr Speaker, the case of the Minister concern is already withdrawn by the DPP. So what sort of case is before the High Court? The case of the suspended attorney general was also withdrawn by the DPP. Whoever instructed those cases to be withdrawn, Mr Speaker, I want to know whether they are legal. I am seeking legal clarification. I am taking the government to court to justify the reasons for the withdrawal of these cases in connection to this issue under question.

The people of this country ought to know. They have the right to know what is happening to the judicial process of this country, and you should not in anyway block Members of Parliament expressing and exercising their rights to information. The fact that ministers of the government using the standing order to interject and to raise issues totally irrelevant to the debate speaks very poorly of them. Let us debate it, make a point Mr Speaker.

I have been talking about the three functions of the government and why they must work together in harmony. It is the administration and Parliament. We have already passed laws in this Parliament and the Judiciary

is implementing those laws, and I hope the administration is not tampering with the laws that we passed in this House. Mr Speaker, it is very important that the parliament or the government must abide to the standard rules of governance. That is why this motion comes in here.

I maintained from the beginning that this government is establishing a poor working relationship with the judiciary of this country for no good reason just because of this particular person. My recommendation to my Prime Minister and my government is to repatriate the fugitive lawyer back to Australia and the issue is solved. Our relationship today would have been solved sooner after if that is done.

Can the government inform Parliament and the people of Solomon Islands why it continues to harbor this person when it is causing enormous damage to the economy, enormous damage to the integrity of...

**Mr Speaker:** Order honorable Member would you like to speak to the motion please?

**Mr Huniehu:** Mr Speaker, it is related to the motion. The board of inquiry is related to the very person that I am talking about. I hope this is justification why I am raising this issue.

This issue of our friend, he is everyone's friend, he is my friend too, is beginning to regionalize. It is inside the Forum and he became a big issue in Australia. It became everyone's issue. It is this Parliament's issue, and therefore, when I mention him, I believe that it is part and parcel of this motion and that is the reason why this motion was brought into this House.

I could not see any justification at all why we should not allow the board of inquiry in Papua New Guinea to come and clear our leaders' names here. I totally agree with the Leader and the mover of the motion that the only way to clear this country's name, our leader's name is to have this board of inquiry's report published, and it will be a regional report. The report will be tabled in the Forum because this issue has already been regionalized to that extent. And for the government to disallow this inquiry to take place basically means that they have something very serious to hide. No.

We should be running an open government. We should not have a mindset on things. We should have open mind. When we have to adjust, we adjust. When we have to readjust, we readjust. When we have to take a reverse gear we take a reverse gear. This is leadership. When you have to take the forward gear, take the forward gear but do not drive too fast. That is the reason for this motion.

Whilst the government had already decided that it would not support this motion, Mr Speaker, I only have this to say to them. Although we on this side of the House are minority, the majority are not always right. The minority even though they are minority just because of constitutional barriers our ideas are just straight forward.

Mr Speaker, I am appealing to every one of us to support this motion so that we put this issue to rest, and I am appealing to you to solve the issue by repatriating our friend to be tried under his country of origin for the cases laid against him.

With those few remarks Mr Speaker, I support the motion.

*(applause)*

**Hon SOGAVARE:** Mr Speaker, I would like to contribute briefly to this motion.

First, Mr Speaker, I want to raise a concern that we have seen it fit in allowing this motion to be tabled in this House. Just look at us, we become, I guess hopeless victims of somebody's agenda, but I guess that is the way this thing is organized and so we are caught in a situation where we have to waste Parliament's time as the Member for Savo/Russells has said.

This side of the House has concern over a lot of misleading statements embodied in the text of the motion that was moved by the mover, and I will just allow later on the Minister of Foreign Affairs to explain the situation on what actually happened and the reasons.

Mr Speaker, in fact I find the motion a bit out of the normal traditional way of wording motions that come before Parliament to get the consideration of the government. This motion is worded as: *“That the Solomon Islands Government allows the ‘Papua New Guinea Defense Board of Inquiry to enter Solomon*

*Islands for the purpose of its inquiry.*” It misses its traditional words, ‘that the government considers’ looking at this request.

Now the reason is clear, Mr Speaker. Motions that come before the consideration of the government of the day moved by private members are very clear. It has been worded like that because of very important reason because the constitution is based on the principles of separation of powers. That is a very important consideration.

In fact that separation of power is clearly articulated in the preamble of the Constitution, embodied in the various structures of the constitutional text by the division of legislative, executive and judicial powers and functions. For that reason, Mr Speaker, when motions like this come before the House we are careful to word it in such a way that it does not allow the legislature to dictate the executive government.

These are separate arms of the government as highlighted by the Member for East Are Are. If the independence of judiciary is what we are concerned about then we should also be concerned about the independence of the executive and the independence of the legislature.

That is one reason, Mr Speaker, why this motion will not get the support of the government because it is actually directing the legislative arm of the government. I feel it impinges into the independence of the executive government. For example, section 59(1) of the Constitution says this House has plenary power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Solomon Islands. And the manner in which it does that function is regulated under section 59(2) of the Constitution as well.

This motion did not come in the form of a bill. It is a report, I guess, that compels the executive arm of a government to do what is within its exclusive competent and discretion. Just as Parliament cannot resolve compared to the judicial branch of the government to release a prisoner from custodial detention, so too does this House cannot resolve, compel or direct the executive branch of the government to allow or not to allow a foreign tribunal to enter this

country as it offends the constitutional principle of this country.

Mr Speaker, debate on this motion should not have been allowed, and it will reserve any practical purpose because at the end of the day unless Parliament legislates to compel the executive, it remains within the sole province and prerogative of the executive government to ignore and override this House.

Mr Speaker, I just want to raise this question because that has been the traditional way such a motion that comes before the House is worded. It should say, “*That the Government considers*”. It is for the purpose that we do not want to intrude into the independence of the executive arm of the government.

A lot has been said, Mr Speaker, and to me that point alone is enough to throw motion out of this House. But the other things that are said in here amounts to defamatory statements. For example, the Constitution is very clear. Section 15(2) says, “*Subject to the provisions of subsection 7, 8 and 9 of this section no person shall be treated in a discriminatory manner by any person acting by virtue of any written law or in the performance of the functions of any public office or any public authority.*”

Mr Speaker, we threw away the name of the suspended Attorney General all over the floor of this Parliament and we are asking what is so special about him. What is special about him? We have already explained these things. You are bringing back issues that we have already explained.

We explained that issue, we explained the reason why we expelled the former Australian High Commissioner from Solomon Islands. We did explain the issue of the relationship between Solomon Islands and Australia, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs will be making statements in this honorable house. We are not like Australia, Mr Speaker, and I am very offended by Australia coming up in the media with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Australia printing his letter right in the middle of the Solomon Star. This is undiplomatic.

The channel of communication to any government whether the Solomon Islands Government should be done through the Foreign Affairs Ministry. Australia does not have the right whatsoever to communicate directly to the

people of Solomon Islands. This demonstrates clearly the attitude that they are running a parallel government in this country, and that is not on.

Issues like that are what we are concerned about. Issues of protecting the sovereignty, respect the sovereignty of this country. We talk about respect, let us have some respect too. The Minister of Foreign Affairs will be making statements of the government, and this is the House we feel that those kinds of statements should be made.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Australian should really be making statements like that in his Parliament, not write directly to the people of Solomon Islands and appeal to them. In fact I find it very interesting. Before they were saying as long as we are needed by the government we will stay. And now when we talk about reviewing certain parts of the Act they are frantic. They go on a mad campaign in public and with organizations telling them to protect them. They have changed. Now they are talking about staying here as long as it takes. I am mentioning this because they are raising some issues that are past and gone.

The other thing that we are interfering with the judiciary system of this country, we are making sweeping statements without really getting our facts right. This is nothing to do with the judiciary system of Solomon Islands or the judiciary system of Papua New Guinea. And it is not a government to government thing. The Solomon Islands Government is dealing with the sovereign Government of Papua New Guinea. That is where we stand is in this thing. Let us get our facts first before we come and make nonsense statements inside this Parliament.

Mr Speaker, I do not want to go more on this one. A God fearing government, Mr Speaker, six times the Member for Savo/Russells mentioned this. For what? We are just hopeless sinners saved by the Grace of God. We are nothing more than that. We are not frightened to say too that we espouse Christian principles. For people to continue to make jokes as God fearing government, God fearing government is just unacceptable.

There are a lot of statements that are basically mere speculations made inside this House as well, which I feel should be ruled out

and not allowed to stand or even recorded because it will spoil Hansard records.

Mr Speaker, if I need to narrow down to the issues that I feel that I need the House to look at is the fact that the independence of the three arms of the government - the judiciary, the legislature and the executive arm must be respected. If independence is what that side of the House continues to espouse, then let us have some. You cannot allow the legislature to direct the executive government to carry out its wish. That is not allowed within our laws.

With that, Mr Speaker, I totally oppose this motion.

**Mr Speaker:** Perhaps some kind of procedural clarification needs to be made because the Honorable Prime Minister talked about independence and the Member for East Are Are talked about independence of the various institutions of the government.

Motions in Parliaments are not bills. They are political intentions of whoever is moving them, which you can either pass and if found later by the government that certain legal situation or agreement exist and the motion's intentions cannot be carried out, then of course it is just a motion.

It is the act of Parliament when we actually decide to legislate, and at the end of the day hopefully enforce that particular provision of the act that needs to be considered seriously in terms of the importance of separation of powers.

As honorable Members are aware we have passed so many motions in this house which have not been acted upon. They were intentions, they were proposals and if they are not possible to be acted upon because of certain important legal issues or constitutional issues they would have been accepted in that context. I think we should not be concern about the Parliament forcing the judiciary or the executive arm of the government to do certain things. Motions are just intentions. They can either be thrown out, they can either be forgotten and they are discussed for purposes for which the mover intended.

**Mr BOYERS:** Mr Speaker, in my short contribution to this motion, I would like to

.....(*inaudible*) and why it should happen. As the Member for West New Georgia/Vona Vona who has been put under pressure because of the purpose of this inquiry which is an issue of sovereignty by two countries, it is a very serious matter. In fact it is more serious than the April riots. It comes to the heart of the security of the country which reflects upon its governance, reflects the bilateral agreements which the countries have honored on behalf of their people – the people who are the sovereignty of this country.

I am going to take a bottom up approach, Mr Speaker, to be the voice of my constituents to put forward the bona fide demand that the Government of Solomon Islands and the Government of Papua New Guinea, which to date has had no response except from the Honorable Prime Minister.

As I said, Mr Speaker, this House represents the sovereignty of our people. To come to light the Papua New Guinea Government has seen it fit to create a commission of inquiry for purposes of transparency and accountability to find out why there is a breach of sovereignty.

What makes it more evident, Mr Speaker, is that the ....and mandating .....by disallowing a commission of inquiry to come to Solomon Islands from our regional big brother to actually find out what was the problem in their system that allowed this breach to happen. The fact that the Solomon Islands Government has seen it fit to disallow this commission of inquiry definitely shows representation of sovereignty on the respect of sovereignty of its people is not getting enough help. If I am the only one in this House who supports this motion, I will. Not because of the number but because it is right.

I will not deny the voice of my 12,000 people on this floor of Parliament who have demanded an apology. They have demanded a response and according to traditional process they have demanded compensation. This is not new to us and not new in our world.

The Honorable Prime Minister made a response or statement in the SIBC stating that the people of Munda have rightful reasons to be upset, and that the Honorable Prime Minister will be addressing this issue through responsible

authorities. I believe I am mandated to represent my people and to date I have not had one request responded to regarding this issue. Except being subject to listening to the SIBC and reading the Solomon Star I know of certain processes that have come to light in disallowing the PNG inquiry to come into the country to get to the bottom of it, to interview people and find out what is going on.

I have also read in the newspaper that the Commission of Inquiry has been disallowed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs because it is a sovereign decision. If that is the case where is sovereign decision of my people? Is this government representing a policy or its representing sovereignty? Does an executive have the right to determine what sovereignty is?

The voices of my people have been made loud and clear but to date there has been no response. As my people have written this issue is not an issue that is going to die here. This is an issue that will supersede this government. It will supersede the Government of Papua New Guinea because true sovereignty is everlasting. It does not belong to this government so that it changes the next time another government comes in and comes in with another policy. Whether this government takes heed and does what is right, at the end of the day it will be pursued.

I congratulate the Papua New Guinea Government for offering its position of support as they have done in their commitment of partnership with RAMSI. I think it might be prudent that the government rejects an ..... It might be prudent to put in on par with the April riots and the Commission of Inquiry itself. You should work with this Commission of Inquiry in Papua New Guinea. That would be a good step in telling this country and especially my people that this government is addressing this issue. But my people have not had a response. I have had a permitted position has been not permitted.

I find myself in a very difficult position, Mr Speaker, because I am not one who likes to make demands. I am not one who likes to be in a position representing my people to make demands. However, I have no choice but to do my duty as a leader. I appeal to this House that we should not become a rubber stamp just

because of expediency. We definitely have security problem in this country. It is evident there is a massive breach of this incident and we are continuing to do so. I think a commission of inquiry should put on par our relationship with Papua New Guinea through this Commission of Inquiry.

I do not believe that we are now in a very stable position with our regional partners to be able to say sovereign people save us.

The government is not pursuing this. It shows the lack of unity by the government. It shows our instability. It shows that we are not worried about security. Not very long ago we have been through a problem before the ethnic tension, the Bougainville conflict which affected us one way or another and this is still fresh in the minds of people in the Western Province.

Bougainville is still going through its process of stabilization. I think an open and transparent manner should put to rest the hearts and minds of the people I represent.

I appeal to the government to stand up and lead in a manner that deserves respect. Politics is politics but at the end of the day we have to do what is right.

I am doing what is right, Mr Speaker, and I will support this motion. Even if the government does not support this motion, it does not matter. I am doing what is right and I find that a lot of people in this House do not do that.

With those few words, Mr Speaker I would like to thank you for giving me time to be able to represent my people's voice. I hope the government takes heed and very shortly will allow this Commission of Inquiry to come into the country and get to the bottom and the cracks of the matter on why this happened in the first place.

With those few comments, I resume my seat.

**Mr ZAMA:** Mr Speaker, I will be very, very brief in my contribution to this motion. First, I would like to thank the honorable Leader of the Opposition, the hardworking Leader and MP for Central Kwara'ae who has been a very strong advocate of transparency and accountability for seeing it fit to move this motion.

Mr Speaker, when I saw this motion on the notice paper yesterday I had difficulty with

the motion especially the issue that was raised here.

I came into Parliament because people of my constituency put their trust and faith in me, and because of that principle I went back to my people last night on a HF radio and we had a radio conference on this very, very important matter. I also had elders in my constituency and in my home and we discussed this matter because of the importance of the inquiry as raised by the Leader of the Opposition.

On the paper this week there was also a media commentary on the issue that was raised here. The difficulty I have here, and with the radio conference I had with my people is that the first question raised to me by my elders is, what is this motion going to do with the bottom up approach. That was the very first question bombarded to me by my leaders.

Secondly, they asked me, is this motion once passed by Parliament, will it increase the price of copra in the villages. That is the question raised to me, Mr Speaker, and that is why I come to the floor of Parliament to express the views of people who elected me to the floor of this Parliament. The second question raised to me is, what is this going to do with the coffee development that is going to take place on Rendova.

The intention of this motion on the big picture with a view to improve transparency and accountability by the institutions that we uphold, has absolutely no relevance to the people I represent, the people who have trust and faith in me to be their representative on the floor of this Parliament.

Mr Speaker, as I have said I would be very brief, I have been demanded by my people to say in Parliament that the MP for South New Georgia/Rendova/Tetepare Constituency totally opposes this motion.

**Mr DAUSABEA:** Mr Speaker, I thank the MP for Shortlands for giving me this opportunity. I will go along the same line like the Member for Rendova/Tetepare and be very brief.

Mr Speaker, first I support the comments made by the MP for Savo/Russell that this motion should not have ended up here. There are avenues, process and ways that should have been resorted to in addressing this issue.

Mr Speaker, I want to raise a question to the 50 Members who are here. We are breaking our brains thinking so hard about the wording of this motion. My first simple question, Mr Speaker is who is causing all these hassles? I think that is what we should establish before moving on to debate the motion. Because somebody watching and laughing at us now for taking up parliament's time debating a non-issue. He is sitting in his air conditioned office watching us.

Why did an officer of the SIG find himself stateless in a foreign country? Who is causing this? Can any of you on that side tell me? I was detained and so I do not know what was going on at that time. Can any of you tell me who is causing these hassles? That is where all these problems begin.

This officer should have been allowed to travel to Solomon Islands and we could have done it in a more diplomatic manner. They should have approached the Solomon Islands Government asking for this person to be recalled. But not a person who is traveling on his way to take up an appointment and in the middle of his journey had his citizenship revoked and so became stateless. That is where the problem begins. Who is causing that? The very same people are now using us to bring this issue into Parliament. Catch the intelligent a bit and know what is going on. They are now using us to argue over what they have instigated. We are national leaders and we should be acting nationally and not bring issues like this to Parliament. Do not allow yourself to be the mouth piece of foreigners.

**Mr Fono:** Point of order. Mr Speaker I want to make it very clear that even the Prime Minister mentioned that this is somebody's agenda. No, not at all, Mr Speaker. It comes right from the heart. This nation belongs to us. Stop defending your actions that is misleading the public. We are not puppets of Australia. Not at all, Mr Speaker. You may laugh. We are national leaders and we are concerned about national issues.

I want them to withdraw their statements that this is a hidden agenda, and this side of the House is a puppet of Australia. Not at all, Mr Speaker! We are representing our

people. I represent 20,000 people of Central Kwara'ae and we are concern.

**Hon Oti:** Point of Order. Is the Leader of Opposition summing up the debate.

**Mr Fono:** It is a point of order.

**Mr Dausabea:** Let me finish my speech Honorable Member for Central Kwara'ae because I have not participated in the last two meetings. Can you allow me to continue?

I have been watching the scene and I know what is going on. He is talking about 20,000 people and I have 50,000 in my constituency. I can verify that if he is proud about the number he has in his constituency. Anyway let me continue on with the debate.

They were talking so much about transparency. Transparency is the catch word here. They were talking about the truth but I see no truth on the other side because I have gone through hell, and I know where it was coming from.

Let me remind honorable Members that we should not bring rumors into this honorable Chamber. We should bring in facts.

Talking about this motion in this honorable Chamber, it is very clear that this Board of Inquiry is from the Defense Force of PNG. Why did that Defense Force not consult the executive and sovereign government of PNG to consult with the executive and sovereign government of Solomon Islands? The sovereign government of PNG knows very well there is no extradition treaty between Solomon Islands and PNG at the moment. That is very simple. I have information that their leader did not approve of this Board coming to Solomon Islands because there was no treaty between the two countries.

We accommodate many PNG citizens in the early nineties during the Bougainville crisis and we did not disrespect them. Our friendliness is still there. Why allow this motion to come to be debated on this floor of Parliament when there is no extradition treaty?

I remember the Member for Aoke/Langa Langa said once in this honorable Chamber that two wrongs do not make one right. If we have an extradition treaty in place, and had this Board consulted its sovereign government, even if I am

on this side, I would have supported this motion. Failing that and with no treaty in place I will be abusing this honorable Chamber to support something that is not in place.

Mr Speaker, some Members who spoke this earlier on touched on the Commission of Inquiry for the April riots. Some even said that a commission of inquiry into the April riots is not important as this commission. Why did you people object that commission if you want the truth to be revealed? Why did you go to the extent of even challenging the terms of reference in the High Court which was over ruled? If we are talking about hiding the truth why not allow the April riot to begin so that the truth will be revealed so that my 50,000 constituents will also know the truth. But we jump for this. Why jump for this one? Is it because somebody wants you to do it? Come on, let us be responsible. I want the truth of the April riot to come out too and I will support this motion too if an extradition treaty is in place.

Mr Speaker, as I have said I will be very brief, the question that we must have in mind when debating this motion is, who is causing all these fusses? That is basically the question we should build on and debate. Because it is not the honorable Prime Minister's making. It is not the government's making. Let us be responsible and let us take on the task by putting things right.

Mr Speaker, as rightly alluded to, this side has pastors, bishops and priests. But this motion has nothing to do with the Churches. Mr Speaker, I will be very happy if that Board of Inquiry is sanctioned by the sovereign government of PNG and if the sovereign government of PNG requests the sovereign government of Solomon Islands, and if there is a treaty in place I will totally support this motion. But failing that, Mr Speaker, I will go along with what the Member for Aoke/Langa Langa stated earlier on that two wrongs do not make one right.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion I oppose this motion.

**Mr TANEKO:** Mr Speaker, this is a very sensitive and very important motion for the nation of Solomon Islands.

Mr Speaker, I stand on behalf of my people of Shortlands Constituency, the constituency at the very border between PNG and Solomon Islands where it was risky to live during the height of the Bougainville Crisis because of the sovereignty of the two different countries. All the 50 constituencies know exactly what it is like to live at the border as it is in the media and the newspapers.

Mr Speaker, there was 10 years of conflict in Bougainville. My people whom I represent have suffered and lived in pain during that time because of the constitutional laws of immigration. The Immigration Act under the Constitution of Solomon Islands in chapter 2 is the freedom and right of this nation and its citizens. The motion here reads, "That the Solomon Islands Government allows the PNG Defense Board of Inquiry to enter Solomon Islands for the purpose of its enquiry". Mr Speaker this is very straightforward. I'll be very brief and short.

The first is that we have seen and felt the pain and suffered because the laws of both countries have been broken, and that is the conflict between Bougainville and PNG. There is no doubt in this House that we all know this.

Here is the House, the highest authority in the land that can change laws and the constitution of the Solomon Islands. Power is in this House. This House can change or amend laws and it can make laws. This motion is just asking if the PNG Defense Force Inquiry can come into the country just to find out the truth. If it finds the truth and if there is evidence or if there is none, I appeal to the Solomon Islands Government and the PNG Government - the two leaders of both countries PNG and Solomon Islands to come together for this inquiry. Whatever the findings they come up with, Mr Speaker, the truth is that they have to apologize to the public and say sorry they have broken the laws of Solomon Islands. That is the truth. We can fight or we can hate other brothers or our neighbor like Australia and New Zealand for committing this and we will go miles and miles.

The truth is that the plane that landed in Munda has already broken the law, it violated the Civil Aviation law. Those laws have been broken. We can feel the pain. I am talking on behalf of my people and we have fears because

we have two airstrips in my constituency - Balalae and Mono airstrips. Anything can happen to us if we do not protect our sovereignty. We have to protect our sovereignty with every good deed from this House. We must protect our fellow citizens by the truth of the law.

We are following the Westminster System and so if our laws do not protect us and do not allow us to dialogue with each other then we better change the laws according to our cultural way and the Melanesian way. Let us see where it is fitting so that we implement the policies of the government. The laws must be tailored according to our culture so that the two leaders can come together, reconcile, sit down together with the people of PNG and Solomon Islands according to the truth that we find. That is my appeal to the nation.

If the Solomon Islands Government breaks the law then let it apologize telling our citizens we are very sorry for breaking the law and promise not to do it again. If we want to change it or tailor the laws to suit our people then let us do so in this House.

I appeal to my good Prime Minister to do just that. This motion is not for us to argue over because we have seen what has happened to us - the pain and suffering. Some of us feel the pains.

I appeal to the SIG to allow PNG to come in and do the inquiry and whatever the findings they come up with, they go back and the two leaders call each other, have a round table discussion and if this side commits an offence then let us say to the nation that we are sorry. Why, Mr Speaker?

We are standing here and talking here because of the power of the people. It is the power of the people. It is the people's power that enabled my voice to be heard in this House. For myself to come into this House, I have nothing myself. The people have given me power. The man with a torn trouser, no shoes, empty belly in the mornings just to go and cast their ballot papers so that we come into this House to change laws or to pass laws or whatever that can be tailored to suit the Constitution or the laws of Solomon Islands in this highest authority of the land - this House. That is the truth.

If Solomon Islands has broken the law then let us admit that we have broken it and apologize to the people. We apologize and tell the people we are very sorry to have authorized the PNG plane to come over to Solomon Islands to bring the guy who has committed a crime.

Mr Speaker, I want us to tell the truth and then let us forgive each another. I know that is not easy. Every one of us is saying we are Christians but we want to hide ourselves until we end up fighting. I have seen the pain. The only way is for both of these two countries - with your officers and my good Foreign Affairs Minister to organize your officers and go to PNG with the Prime Minister and his executive with the Foreign Affairs Minister of PNG and his executive to sit down at the round table in the Melanesian culture and way to settle issues that are very important for both countries.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I support the motion for the betterment and peace of the two countries.

**Mr HAOMAE:** Mr Speaker, I shall be very brief. First of all I am duty bound to thank the honorable Leader of the Opposition, the MP for Central Kwara'ae for bringing this motion on the floor of Parliament. Mr Speaker, I also would like to thank your good self and the colleague Member of Parliament for Savo/Russells for allowing this motion to be debated in Parliament.

Sir, it appears to me that there has been confusion in this Parliament about the systems of government we have adopted - the parliamentary system of government versus the presidential system of the United States.

The Prime Minister was coming from the point of view in confusing the situation as regards to the separation of power. In a parliamentary system of government, the Parliament does not dictate because if it dictates then it exceeds its mandate under the constitution. It can only scrutinize, and as such motions are scrutinizing the government and are not dictating. They are merely proposals and whether they are passed or not it is up to the government to decide the timing, place and whether they will be implemented or not.

I moved a motion in this Parliament too that was passed about pawpaw latex to diversify

and bring into place a new crop for purposes of export. The Government has not implemented that motion up until today.

Mr Speaker, motions are proposals in line with the parliamentary democracy that we have for purposes of scrutinizing the executive government and to dictate because the boundary is in the constitution itself by virtue of the parliamentary system of government set up.

As distinct from the presidential system of the United States where the United States Congress can dictate to the executive government. The Prime Minister is trying to confuse these two issues today.

But at the outset, Mr Speaker, I wish to clarify, and I am not a lawyer, but I would like to ensure that this thing is put right with the government because when the motion was moved the Minister of Foreign Affairs jumped up as if nails are on his seat.

Mr Speaker, I have just come back from my constituency and I also share the views the MP for Rendova mentioned. The olos (old people) at home are also discussing this issue. They also questioned why the government stopped the Papua New Guinea Defense Board of Inquiry to come into Solomon Islands. One of the olos also asked the same question, 'If the Defense Force Board of Inquiry comes to Solomon Islands, is it going to put yams in our plates? Then another olo asked, 'If this defense board of Inquiry comes, is it going to give us money?' Then another wise olo said, 'On Independence day we are here in our tribes, in our villages and we decided to be part of Malaita Province'. Then he said again, 'Also on the same day we have decided to become part of Solomon Islands as a nation'. Therefore, what is affecting the nation of Solomon Islands is also affecting those of us in the villages. Therefore, let us not only think of the yams in our plates as the Member for Rendova said or let us not only think whether the price of copra is going to increase. We are part and partial of Malaita Province, the Solomon Islands, the Pacific Region and the world community.

That particular argument advanced by the honorable MP for Rendova is very simplistic. I think the olo from Small Malaita is above the olo of Rendova in that particular regards in having an international perspective on

an issue that can affect the welfare and security of the nation.

Mr Speaker, we must be careful not to play double standards especially in regional affairs. My comment is that I want to be helpful to the government and I also want to be helpful to PNG as a neighbor.

Mr Speaker, international investment in economic terms in Papua New Guinea is very high. They are worried about their so many risks. Papua New Guinea has more minerals than Solomon Islands. We have it too but PNG is big country and so it has more minerals than us. We must be helpful to them and not impede this Inquiry. We have to be helpful to our neighbor.

My friend, the honorable Member for East Honiara said that he does not support this motion because there is no treaty in place or an extradition treaty in place between PNG and Solomon Islands.

Mr Speaker, in my view what is legal may not be right too. At times what is legal is not right. Mr Speaker, I want to appeal to a higher station - the conscience of man - to the conscience of the 50 Members of Parliament, beyond legality and beyond treaties. I wish to submit to you, Mr Speaker, to appeal to the conscience of man the question whether this is right or wrong.

Mr Speaker, I put my vote on the side of right, and I support the motion.

**Mr NUIASI:** Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me this chance to debate on this important motion. I thank the Leader of Opposition for bringing this motion to the floor of this Parliament. I thank you too, Sir, for your ruling in regards to this motion.

Mr Speaker, having looked through this motion and the motions that will be presented today, I am a little bit suspicious in trying to see the logic and the trend we are following. I may be wrong but next Friday I can see that the motion that will be moved is the motion of no confidence.

Mr Speaker, the issue we are discussing now on this floor of Parliament has been dealt with by relevant authorities. I think the authorities are not ignorant but are doing their

best in whatever they can do to address this issue for our sovereign nation.

Mr Speaker, as I have always said in my previous debates on this floor of Parliament, this Parliament consists of the 50 Members voted in by their constituencies to come and debate and to contribute constructively for the betterment of Solomon Islands.

Mr Speaker, this is an existing issue and an issue that is being dealt with by relevant authorities, and so I see no reason why this motion is moved in Parliament for us to discuss.

Mr Speaker, I stand here to express my disappointment that this motion is wasting my time. Anyway, I can only see this motion as productive had the Opposition Bench with all the good ideas and wisdom it had approach the government in relation to this particular issue sitting on a round table discussion to iron out the differences and see where we can go from here. Mr Speaker, that is the only question I am asking as a new Member of Parliament. Have they been asking the government to discuss this issue on a round table discussion?

Mr Speaker, like others who have spoken on this motion, I would be in favor of this motion if all relevant authorities and the wisdom of the Opposition can come together, discuss and iron out the differences at the executive level and then go forward from there.

As we have already know, Mr Speaker, the media on day one of this issue played its part. The legal avenues too have been involved, the executive government was involved and now we bring this issue through this motion to the legislature. Why do we have to go this far?

Sir, I am confused as to what this Legislature should be dealing with and what the executive should deal with because this is a matter for the administration or the executive to deal with. That is why I am asking how many times did the Opposition and the government sit down together to discuss this issue that we are now talking about in this honorable House. I think the best way is to discuss things together. If we are for the nation why not come together and discuss this issue so that we can come to some constructive conclusions.

Let us wait help each other. The way we are discussing in this honorable House seems to be pulling us apart. How can we achieve our

objectives if we are pulling ourselves apart from each other? This is what I am confused about. But thank you for giving me this opportunity to debate this motion.

Mr Speaker, the other side is always saying that the government is trying to hide something. As a Member of the government I can see nothing that we hide. We are transparent. But what I am more interested in is for us to pass the budget because this is the tool that the government will work on. If we can only pass this budget and then let us work that would be the only avenue I am interested in.

I am not a lawyer to talk on legal jargons or legal things. Let the lawyers do that and leave the body that can address this issue to address it better than us. We will only talk about it if there is need for the legislature to say amen to it.

Briefly speaking I cannot see any reason why I should be in favor of this motion because someone representing the people of West Are Are, I think a round table sitting should be an option we should take.

Let us discuss things together, for after all we are the government. It is not only this side that is the government but all of us. But because of the system and that is why we have a government and an opposition. If there is anything good for the nation why not put our heads together and come to an amicable solution. Talk about it so that we can come to conclusion or a compromise that will help our people.

Mr Speaker, coming into this Parliament for the first time, I am always confused because in many of our debates we say we are representing our people. Our people are looking for development so let us not confuse ourselves because they are looking at us to deliver services to them. They are not looking at us to come and argue in this honorable House.

When we argue about such a motion we are not only arguing about our own areas but we are wasting our time here, the good time that we are supposed to be passing the budget so that we can go home and implement our programs.

Because of these reasons, Mr Speaker, I do not see any reason why I should support this motion.

**Mr LONAMEI:** Mr Speaker, first of all I would like to congratulate the Opposition Leader for bringing this very important motion to this floor of Parliament. Like other Members who said they are representing their people, I would like the voice of Isabel to be heard in here too.

Mr Speaker, for us in Isabel, this person who is causing all these problems is not known to us. Why is the government so fussy about this person, treating him as very important that it cannot get somebody else somewhere to replace him?

Mr Speaker, this motion is also a very simple motion asking the board of inquiry of Papua New Guinea to come over here and to find out the people who are involved in this saga. If we are transparent and we have nothing to hide then why should we be concerned about this inquiry coming into the country?

Mr Speaker, if we oppose this motion then it only means we are hiding something. If we allow this inquiry to come over and find out for itself by supporting this motion then we are transparent and we like the truth to be revealed.

Therefore, on behalf of the people of the entire Isabel Province, I would like to say we are in support of this motion so that Papua New Guinea Defense Force Inquiry can come in to do its investigation. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

**Hon BOSETO:** Mr Speaker, I am not going to be long. When this television is watching us murmuring or fixing our phrases, our movement and speeches, there is one above x-raying each of our hearts. Therefore, I just want to read His words and then I will stop. "Who can understand the human heart? There is nothing else so deceitful. It is too sick to be healed. I the Lord search the minds and the hearts of people. I treat each of them according to the way they live and according to what they do. The two-edge sword of the word of God judges the desires and the thoughts of the heart. There is nothing that can be hidden from God. Everything in all creation is exposed and lies open before His eyes and it is to Him that we must all give an account of ourselves.

Mr Speaker, if this side of the House is still hiding its sins or its criminal activities then

let God judge us. That is the only way I can see it. The Bible says our sins will find us out. May be not long our sins will be found out.

May God bless us as we pray and debate. Let God continue to judge our hearts and reveal His truth. Thank you very much.

**Mr KWANAIRARA:** Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Mr Speaker, the motion moved by Leader of Opposition is essentially a sign of maturity, democracy and significant for the development of democratic principles of transparency, accountability and good governance.

The executive government of Solomon Islands is charged with the responsibility of daily management of the sovereign affairs of this nation on behalf of the people. As national leaders, let us not forget that one of our important responsibilities is the safeguarding of democracy. Democracy is defined as government of the people by the people and for the people. I would just like to remind us of these three areas.

The Leader of Opposition, Mr Speaker, is carrying out these democratic principles as well as his constitutional responsibilities by putting this motion on the floor of Parliament for us to debate on behalf of the thousands of Solomon Islands citizens in whose names we are to lead in the highest ethical and moral standards.

Mr Speaker, the issue of this motion has been debated by people of this nation over the past three months, and I believe a verdict has been reached. It is a serious breach and a violation of the Solomon Islands Aviation laws, therefore, the people of this sovereign nation demand an explanation from the government.

Mr Speaker, the unauthorized PNG Defense Force Flight into the Solomon Islands airspace is a very serious and dangerous precedence the government should never entertain, not at all.

The application of double standard is one area that we need to stamp out. National leadership brings with it consequences because we are compromising moral and ethical standards.

Mr Speaker, maintaining good relationship with Papua New Guinea is of paramount importance, not only because we are Melanesian brothers but because we are obliged to allow the law - national or international take its natural course.

If the government has no prior knowledge of the elite fight which means we have nothing to hide then why are we unyielding to the call for foreign investigation here in Honiara by the PNG Defense Board of Inquiry.

Mr Speaker, the justice of the PNG Board of Inquiries insisted that its investigation **would not be complete**, I repeat, **would not be complete** without them coming over to conduct the interview here in Solomon Islands or Honiara. This matter involves both PNG and Solomon Islands. Both are critical to any relevant and meaningful findings and conclusion in their final report. The final report is very important.

With these very short remarks, Mr Speaker, I resume my seat.

**Mr KENGAVA:** Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity to contribute to this motion.

First of all, I stand here as well to speak on behalf of my people of North West Choiseul, sharing the very border with Papua New Guinea. This motion is very important to be tabled in Parliament and I thank the Leader of Opposition for doing so, so that I can have the opportunity to express my people's feelings when the border of another country is being violated.

When this happened in October last year, Mr Speaker, the people in my constituency can recall very well the Bougainville Crisis when we had sleepless nights and days. Mr Speaker, our border was violated and therefore it is very important that we must not forget so.

Mr Speaker, in briefly contributing to the motion, I want to say that as a national leader I think we should not only restrict ourselves to talk about matters of constituency in this chamber. As a national leader we should only not restrict ourselves to talk about matters of the nation in this chamber. Mr Speaker, as a national leader we must also scrutinize and watch our international relations.

What the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is doing in this country is of my interest too and as well as the interest of my people. Our relationship with other countries will surely affect the very lives of our people in this nation, in the provinces, and in the constituencies that we talk so much about to represent.

Mr Speaker, this motion as already alluded to by yourself, is only a motion that gives an opportunity to 50 Members of Parliament as national leaders representing the sovereignty of this nation on behalf of our people to say things that could be of usefulness to the government of the day or could be an advice to the government of the day, could be a warning to the government of the day. To totally brush aside what needs to be discussed in this Chamber is denying the voice of my people in North West Choiseul to be heard.

Mr Speaker, this legislature is the right place to say something and to scrutinize the work of the government. Therefore, Mr Speaker, it is misleading to say and I do not agree with the MP for Rendova/Tetepare that it is not our concern.

Mr Speaker, the airspace of Solomon Islands is being violated in October last year and therefore the sovereignty of Solomon Islands is demised by elements of a foreign nation.

I am very concerned about this and this motion clearly wants to help clarify that fear, that question that is still lingering in the minds of the thousands of our people, especially my people in North West Choiseul.

If the Papua New Guinea Government offers to clear all the questions surrounding the violation of Solomon Islands airspace, I have no difficulty supporting this motion and the work of the Defense Board of Inquiry.

Mr Speaker, if the government strongly opposes the Papua New Guinea's dutiful interest, as a colleague neighbor of the United Nations, of the Commonwealth, of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, of the Forum, then I am sad to say that we are putting more pressure on our ordinary people who would want to know the reasons why the government refused to allow the Defense Board of Inquiry into this nation.

In concluding my short contribution, on the question of who caused all these problems in

the first place, I too have the same question on who is causing all these. Mr Speaker, the Defense Board of Inquiry from Papua New Guinea would be of help to answer probably in part or in whole the question of who is causing all these problems. If we want to know the answer then part of finding the answer is to allow the PNG Defense Board of Inquiry to carry out its work in Solomon Islands with the permission of the government in order to create better relations, international relations, and foreign relations, as I have said.

Our dealings with outside countries cannot be done in isolation in the ways we are going to support our people down in the rural areas. The bottom up approach, the rural development plans that we want to facilitate for our people also rests on how we deal with our neighbors.

It is not worth a cent, Mr Speaker, to offer the people of my constituency \$10million if we have people crossing into our border and chasing us into the bushes. It is useless. It is worth no penny.

Security and good relations with our neighbors is very, very important in order to enjoy the budget that we are now debating.

Finally Mr Speaker, the motion is only asking the government to allow the Papua New Guinea Board of Inquiry to enter Solomon Islands to carry out its job. It is not here to question matters of sovereignty. If it does, then it is the duty of this Parliament again to defend that. The Opposition will not hesitate to question any foreign body that threatens our sovereignty on the floor of this Parliament.

To complete the job, the Board of Inquiry is only asking to complete its inquiry because of their intrusion into the Solomon Islands by the Papua New Guinea Defense Aircraft.

Mr Speaker, with these few comments, I support the motion.

**Hon MANETOALI:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, for this opportunity to contribute to this motion.

Mr Speaker, Papua New Guinea as we know attained independence in 1975, while Solomon Islands in 1978. These two countries are Melanesian partners. But remember too that Micronesians, Polynesians and other races also

live in Papua New Guinea and in Solomon Islands, not only Melanesians. However, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands are very close neighbors.

My only concern here, Mr Speaker, is the Solomon Islands Government allowing the Papua New Guinea Defense Board of Inquiry into the country. The motion requests Papua New Guinea Defense Board of Inquiry to carry out inquiry in Solomon Islands. Hence, this is asking the government to allow the Papua New Guinea Defense Board of Inquiry to come in.

Papua New Guinea, Mr Speaker, as an independent nation has a Parliament. Solomon Islands too, has a Parliament, and Parliament is the highest law making body in any country.

The Papua New Guinea Parliament has passed a law dealing with inquiries. The Solomon Islands Parliament too may have a law dealing with inquiries. Papua New Guinea has a national constitution and Solomon Islands too has a national constitution. Each country runs its affairs subject to its own constitutional laws.

The motion before us is for the Solomon Islands Government to allow the Defense Board of inquiry to enter Solomon Islands and do its inquiry. My concern here is that, is the Solomon Islands Government not breaching the laws of Papua New Guinea or the laws of Solomon Islands or the international laws or the principles of conflict of laws?

Papua New Guinea Defense Board of Inquiry, Mr Speaker, is a sovereign board of inquiry of Papua New Guinea. It is my view that it may be wrong for the government to carry out what the motion is asking for. To me this issue should be put to the judiciary, the high court for legal interpretation. That is whether the Solomon Islands Government can allow the Papua New Guinea Defense Board of Inquiry to carry out inquiry in Solomon Islands. We need an answer to this issue.

The Solomon Islands Government does not have power over the Papua New Guinea Defense Board of Inquiry as that is a board sovereign to Papua New Guinea. Only Papua New Guinea has power over its board of inquiry. Likewise Papua New Guinea does not have power over any Solomon Islands board of inquiry. Only the Solomon Islands Government has power over its board of inquiry.

Mr Speaker, those are my few concerns and comments on this motion and I beg to take my seat.

**Hon OTI:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for this motion. Of course, at the outset raising points of order in relation to the competency of Parliament under Standing Orders to consider this motion, but you have made your ruling. The concerns that have just been expressed by the Minister responsible for justice basically alluded to why we raised the point of order in the first place.

Mr Speaker, before I put the position of the government in relation to this matter, first of all I would like to make a few clarifications. First of all on the requirement or non requirement that has been alluded to by the mover of the motion in relation to a protest as is usual on matters of this nature when there is a breach of our international airspace or if it happens on the oceans or the seas, the same also applies.

As I clarified earlier on, the incident took place in the early hours of the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 2006. As soon as we were alerted on this I summoned the Papua New High Commissioner to my office that afternoon and at that same time issued a note of protest dated the same day - 10<sup>th</sup> October 2006, and the records are quite in order.

There has not been any reply as yet because the concerns we raised has to be established within the jurisdiction of Papua New Guinea so that they can make out who is liable for that breach whether officially or personally. That is why the board of inquiry has been set up, and only after the board of inquiry will they respond to the note that was sent on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2006. That is the format and that is the process that is going to be invoked by Papua New Guinea.

At this juncture too may I also make clarification especially by the Member for East Are Are that I was specifically sent to Papua New Guinea on the 26<sup>th</sup> January, and was somehow reported in the media, to go and block the Defense Force Board of Inquiry to come to Solomon Islands. That is far from the truth MP for East Are Are.

I have here my records of the mission that I made to Papua New Guinea. I made calls on a number of people including the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Commissioner of Police, the U.S Ambassador on matters between the United States and Solomon Islands. So the records are quite in order.

Mr Speaker, I hope at the end of the clarification the honorable mover of the motion will rethink whether or not he should withdraw the motion and let it be not voted on.

Why I am saying this is because contrary to what has been said that not allowing this Board of Inquiry will affect our relations because of the very close relations between the two states as MSG particularly with the MSG group of families. The fact that this motion has been tabled in Parliament itself is discourteous to that very cordial relation between the two states. I will tell you why and I am reading to you, Mr Speaker, if I can quote the records of my meetings with the Papua New Guinea Government officials.

Defense Force Board Inquiry visit to Solomon Islands, and I quote; "*Honorable Minister Oti sought clarification from the Papua New Guinea Government on the proposed Defense Board of Inquiry visit to Solomon Islands, particularly its jurisdiction whether it also applies to Solomon Islands. It was revealed in the meeting that the Defense Board of Inquiry does not have jurisdiction to conduct its interviews in Solomon Islands, and as such it would be inappropriate for the board of inquiry to visit Solomon Islands to conduct the interviews.*"

That is the understanding of these two governments. What about this motion? Is Parliament not going to respect the Government of Papua New Guinea to go ahead with this inquiry Mr Speaker? Contrary to if this Board does not come it will affect our relations. In fact if this Board comes then we are disrespectful to Papua New Guinea. That is officially the records of the meeting. Think what you want to think Mr Speaker, but you are hearing it from the horse's mouth.

You have made wide speculations and you have gone off the mark. This is the authority I am giving to Parliament.

With those few remarks I beg the honorable mover of the motion to withdraw the motion. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Fono:** Mr Speaker, in winding up the debate on this motion, I would like to thank you for your ruling in allowing this motion to be freely debated by those who have contributed. I thank all colleague MPs for contributing to this very important motion.

Although, Mr Speaker, it may be defeated because the government side has the number, it has achieved its intention in which explanations are made to clarify allegations or doubts or questions that are hanging in the minds of our people. Without moving this motion, I believe those clarifications will not be made on the floor of this House.

Mr Speaker, I respect the sentiments raised by Members that this motion is a waste of time and it has nothing to do with their electorates, but I am surprised. This is the chamber to discuss national issues. If you do not want to do that you resign and get somebody else who is interested in debating national issues to represent his people. Or if you are confused you resign too.

Mr Speaker, this is the chamber to discuss issues of national interest, and as long as we are elected and we are on this side of the House, we will make sure that the executive government is accountable for the decisions it makes. Our people cannot talk. Only a very few of them read in the media of issues affecting this nation. But the rural people have no say in whatever decisions the government is doing. Why? It is because Ministers and backbenchers did not even go home during Christmas to hold meetings with their people. Not like some of us who have held several public meetings to educate our people and make public awareness on government programs or decisions. These are the very national issues that were raised at these public meetings.

Mr Speaker, it is important that this sort of motion that has negative repercussions or ramifications must be discussed freely in this chamber.

I believe it is an honor for moving such a motion. We are all indigenous Solomon Islanders. I would like to put on record that this

is not an agenda of Australia or any external forces that the Prime Minister or my good friend from East Honiara have made allegations and that is why I interjected. We are all Solomon Islanders and we speak from the heart because we know exactly that if these issues are not thoroughly assessed and implemented, they will have negative impact on our nation, on our people we have been mandated to serve and represent in this honorable house.

Mr Speaker, let us brush aside the notion that the Opposition is the mouthpiece of Australia. Not at all, Mr Speaker, not at all. If there is a spy unit in the Prime Minister's Office monitor our telephone calls. None of us ever communicate with Australia directly like your good self and the Foreign Minister who are now in office governing this nation to have direct contact with Australia. We are national leaders and we speak on issues that we know would affect this nation. I want that to be recorded and made clear to the government side.

Mr Speaker, a lot of points have been raised and I will not repeat them. But we have respect for our sovereignty as a nation. Our sovereignty is still intact. We have the judiciary, now a robust functioning legislature and your executive government. That is what sovereignty is. It still functions. The sovereignty we see not respected is when we are involved in the decision to fly over the Papua New Guinea Defense Force to land without permission in our airports. Who knows if that is precedence? They might land in Isabel or Temotu without permission as long as they have valid passports and work permits they can be allowed. Is that so, Mr Speaker?

If the laws of this land does not cater for such I challenge the government, whoever Minister responsible to bring an amendment to those legislations because it infringes on our sovereign right.

I heard that the Civil Aviation Act does not have any penalty to punish this man or whoever brings him into our airspace. I am surprised, Mr Speaker. We are a sovereign nation and our sovereign rights have been abused and violated.

That is why we see it as very important, and it may not be legally correct but morally we have an obligation to show, not only to our

neighbor Papua New Guinea but the international community and the regional committee that we are part of the Melanesian block working together for the good of our nations.

Mr Speaker, therefore morally the government has an obligation to allow that Papua New Guinea Defense Board of Inquiry to complete its investigation. It may not be sanctioned by the Papua New Guinea Government. But I hope and I believe that whatever is the outcome of that inquiry would also give the Papua New Government consideration to improve on their legislation or take necessary disciplinary action against those who are responsible.

Mr Speaker, is our government not conscious of that? They have violated our laws. Are we going to just brush it aside, may I ask? They have violated our laws and so justice must take its course so that morally it is right.

On the other hand, Mr Speaker, if the government does not allow this board of inquiry to come, I challenge the government to establish its own commission of inquiry to find out who was involved and who allowed the coming in of the PNG Defense plane to intrude into our sovereign space. I challenge the good government to establish your own Commission of Inquiry and determine that.

Mr Speaker, I thank you so much and I believe that conscience voting will take place on this motion rather than a collective decision that Cabinet or Caucus may have decided on. We must vote according to conscience.

With these few comments, Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

**Mr Speaker:** With the understanding that the passages or non passage of motions moved by Parliament are subject to existing legal provisions in the country, the motion is put to the vote.

*The motion is defeated*

*Sitting suspended for lunch break*

*Parliament resumes*

### **Motion No. 3**

**Mr FONO:** Mr Speaker, I rise the second time to move this motion standing in my name in today's order paper. The motion reads:-

***'That the Solomon Islands Government refrains from rearming the police force, including the Prime Minister's VIP Officers as the rearming of officers poses greater danger and the timing of such an exercise premature'***

Mr Speaker, from the outset before moving the motion, I have to make it very very clear that democracy is for the people by the people and of the people, and as such this motion is dedicated to the rural masses and people of Solomon Islands.

Sir, I have to make it very clear too that this motion as agreed upon by the Parliamentary Opposition is to call on the government to withdraw its intention of rearming the Close Protection Unit or whatever unit within the Police Force as been advocated by the government in recent months.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, I have to make it very very clear that this motion is not an agenda of any foreign elements, as has always been advocated by the government side that the Opposition side colludes with the Australia Government to raise issues here on the floor of Parliament. Not at all, Mr Speaker, and I have to make that very clear.

We as national leaders must take into consideration national issues of importance to this nation and people who voted us to this honorable chamber so that we speak from the heart in order to serve their interest.

Sir, this is a very serious motion. This motion is serious because it speaks of a matter that has caused Solomon Islands as a nation so much pain and anguish not so long ago. This motion is about guns, guns and guns.

Mr Speaker, it is a subject we knew we have gotten rid off and we now fear guns. What we do not need in this country is guns. What we do not require when we are rebuilding our nation is guns. We have gotten rid off guns in order to rebuild trust and confidence in ourselves and each other, and furthermore the trust and confidence that others including foreign investors and our development partners have in our nation.

Mr Speaker, in moving this motion I have the following reasons why I think rearming the Police Force or even the Close Protection Unit of the Force is not only irresponsible but is profoundly premature.

Mr Speaker, it is not long ago that we have had the experience of the ethnic tension in this country. In fact thinking about it was just like yesterday. To be exact, that was in the early 2000. To rearm the Police would amount to a total show of foolishness and arrogance on the part of whoever government is responsible at that time.

Mr Speaker, the timing for a possible rearming of the Police cannot be worse. It is premature and dangerous to expect rearming of our police officers. This includes rearming even the Close Protection Unit of the Police Force that provides daily protection for the Prime Minister and other dignitaries.

Sir, the Opposition supports government policies but the Opposition would not support the rearming of the Police Force as a policy for the government to implement. No.

Sir, the government needs to decide a better time for such a policy. This time is not the right time to implement such a policy and that is why the question at hand is, what is the priority? Is rearming a priority or reconciliation of groups involved in the recent ethnic conflict?

Secondly, Mr Speaker, one of the reasons is the fear that rearming will cause. Not long ago our people feared for their lives. They had fear because of the presence of guns. Lest we forget, guns were around, guns abound, guns brought fear to many of our people.

As you know, fear itself is not a thing, it is a spirit and a feeling. With the news of this government's intention of rearming the police, Mr Speaker, people are starting to express uncertainty and fear. They are starting to see fear stalking our streets, our neighborhoods, our communities and even our islands.

Sir, the government's intention to rearm the Police has also raised so many questions. It has also caused doubts and brought fear to so many of our people not only here in Honiara but even in the rural areas.

Sir, as we know during the past experiences of the past ethnic tension some have been raped especially women, some have been

shot and killed and therefore no amount of planning, policy making and the government's reassurance will erase fear from the conscience and memories of our people especially, our good people of Guadalcanal Province whom some members of the Force used guns to intimidate and kill in the past. We had enough and enough is enough.

Thirdly, rearming and RAMSI. At this time rearming of the Police is not necessary. For the last three years RAMSI has performed security duties on our behalf. Security per se cannot be particularized. Security, in other words, is a universal language.

Mr Speaker, lest we forget RAMSI has been assisting us not only to rebuild ourselves but to rebuild the sovereignty of this nation. During the ethnic period our sovereignty has been drastically compromised. Where was our sovereignty during the ethnic tension, may I ask? Where was sovereignty at that time? It was in the hands of a few who had guns.

Mr Speaker, as you can see RAMSI had come and help us rebuild our economy. RAMSI has helped support our people in the communities all around the country. RAMSI has helped us with our debt repayment. Have we forgotten RAMSI since its arrival it has settled the interest of our arrears with our financial institutions. In short RAMSI has come to help build up our once tattered national sovereignty.

Until RAMSI officers were refused to provide security for heads of government, they have provided exactly that for our senior politicians or our prime ministers since their arrival. Who are we fearful of our lives, may I ask? Indeed Mr Speaker, RAMSI as an independent and impartial entity that can provide security to cover for even our Head of State if the government so requests.

Fourthly, Mr Speaker, this is a rushed government policy. Mr Speaker, like quite a number of the present government policies, this one is no exception. The rush to rearm the police is a policy cooked overnight. Rushed policies are often not properly thought over, scrutinized and re-assessed. What negative implications this policy will have on the lives of our ordinary people? Mr Speaker, the lives of people are not to be rushed when we develop

policies for this country. They should not be done overnight but the rearming policy appears to be one of those policies that has been cooked overnight.

Fifthly, Mr Speaker, rearming and war. Sir, in our Melanesia custom rearming means preparation for war. If that is the case, the least we want to know is who are our enemies? Sir, with the government's intention to rearm the central message is clear, guns are back and our people would say these are the guns used to kill our people, these are guns some people used to rape women and kill innocent lives.

Sir, the call to rearm the police by this present government is a call to war. For highly traumatized families, those who were tortured, raped, etc, rearming of the police is the same as return of guns to kill us. Before the ethnic tension guns were the properties of the government. It was the same government guns that the PFF used to kill others. That broken trust must take a long time to mend.

Sixthly, Mr Speaker, rearming and the goodwill of our people. Anyone who knows Solomon Islanders and their cultures would appreciate that our people are very responsible. In fact it is carrying out these responsibilities that Solomon Islanders are well known for. If leaders are good and kind, for example, then we have this deep rooted custom to reciprocate them accordingly with goodness and kindness, but the opposite is equally true.

Mr Speaker, of late the Parliamentary Opposition is what we have seen since the government expressed its intention to rearm the police or even the Close Protection Unit of the Police, many quarters of the society have voiced their concern, suspicion and outright anger. In deed, many of our non government groups or NGOs, the civil society have expressed such opposition. For example, recently we have heard opposition from the Solomon Islands Council of Trade Union. Previously we have expressed statements raised by the National Council of Women, Solomon Islands Christian Association, the Transparency International and the Development Exchange Services. Sir, even the former Chairman of the National Peace Council was reported to have said, and I quote, "Under no circumstances should rearming be

allowed whether it be one, ten or many guns". End of quote.

Mr Speaker, the masses have spoken, people have expressed their concerns. Civil Society groups have expressed their concerns, Non Government Organizations have expressed their concern except for what used to be the previous People's Power. We have not heard anything from this group. Where is it now? I recently heard that the leader was employed as one of the political appointees, so there is no longer any Peoples Power but the Civil Society has spoken. Who else are we going to listen to their voices in order to act as a responsible government? Many of our people are against rearming of the Police Force. I also know very well that the Guadalcanal Provincial Government has also expressed its position on this matter.

Mr Speaker, if it is the government for the people by the people and of the people, the government should have open ears and listen and take to heart the cries of our people. It is the goodwill and trust of our people that we need. No amount of rearmament would protect leaders from their people who refuse to have them any longer as leaders.

Without taking much time and with the dead seriousness that this motion demands, Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

*(applause)*

*The motion is open for debate*

**Mr HUNIEHU:** Mr Speaker, thank you for allowing the floor of Parliament for me to participate just very briefly on this very important motion moved by the Leader of Opposition.

I believe the essence of the question is how can we make peace in Solomon Islands? In that context, if it was in the Middle East they believe that making peace is through the barrel of the gun. The United States of America decided that the only way to achieve peace in Iraq is to declare war on Saddam Hussein. Israelis were convinced that the only way to win the war in Lebanon is to declare war with the use of the barrel of gun. We can see how

various countries interpret ways of creating peace.

On the hand during the social ethnic tension the people of Solomon Islands have decided that the way to make peace in our country is not through the barrel of the gun. In fact this country was declared a gun free country during the social ethnic period. There were many attempts during those periods to get rid of guns that are causing fears amongst our Solomon Islanders.

I appreciate the fact that this is government policy but at the same time government policies are developed and are created to please the people they are supposed to be serving. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, as the mover of the motion had eloquently amplified, the very moment our people heard rearmament in whatever context, in whatever measurable way this will be implemented and applied, there are expressions of doubts, there are expressions of fear throughout the corners of this country. It means that something is wrong with a government stated policy and it must be the government of the day to either decide to continue with the policy or refrain from it as the motion implies.

Mr Speaker, in Solomon Islands I believe the way to make peace is not rearmament. I believe the way to make peace is by negotiation, by reconciliation and praying to God Almighty to instill in us the message of peace, to instill in us that the use of guns is satanic and that we are supposed to be God's loving people and we should always opt for absolute peace.

Mr Speaker, I see rearmament of the Police, although for a small number of Police Force, as may be the government's policy, it is sending out a message of fear to our people.

Mr Speaker, during the ethnic tension days whenever our people heard gunshots hundreds of them will be running for cover. So even if we have 50 or 100 men armed that is enough to send shockwaves throughout Honiara. That is not the kind of society that we should be developing and we should be creating for Solomon Islanders.

Mr Speaker, many Solomon Islanders have already given back their guns to the government as part of the policy framework

initiated by the last government to have guns retrieved from owners to remove fear from our people. During those days there were even talks of gun purchase and some aid donors were going to provide millions of dollars to buy guns from those who possess guns. But the problem then was that if that policy was implemented, there will be an influx of guns coming from our border - Bougainville, so that policy option was not pursued.

Mr Speaker, here we are having returned this country to serenity and tranquility are now trying to come back to push this nation back to the pre-ethnic tension days. I strongly submit that this policy needs to be seriously reviewed, and there is no need for it. We must listen to the voices of our people. I think the majority of our people do not want to see anyone in this country rearm.

This country is made up of more than 100 different languages, tribes, islands who still think about the effects of the social ethnic period days. Why should we start creating fears amongst our people? If this policy is justified, one day it will be abused, politically abused in the future.

If the Prime Minister has 50 men around him and there is a riot in Honiara, he can use this to his own political interest. Or is it why he is developing this policy? No, Mr Speaker. If we have good governance policy, transparent then why should we fear and why should we rearm? It does not make sense to me in particular at this point in time may be in many more years to come.

Mr Speaker, this policy is also a direct violation of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands. They are the ones charged with the security of the government and the people of Solomon Islands. Why create a double security system where there is the Regional Assistance Mission available to provide non guaranteed security and then the local Force.

I warn, Mr Speaker, that if our local policemen are armed, if there was an argument, I do not think they will hesitate to fire bullet at RAMSI and do you not think that RAMSI will shoot back or they can also do that to politicians. What makes you think they cannot do it?

Last night I know of a whole lot of disgruntle, local Solomon Islanders complaining about the government not paying for their services since December last year. These are threats to society. If you do not meet their obligation or their commitments, and they have access to guns, they can re-use it. That was done during the social ethnic tension. I do not want us to return this country to those periods because they become part of our regrettable history and now we should see the future with a dimension of hope, with a dimension of building peace with each other through negotiation, through dialogue, through reconciliation and better understanding of each others' culture.

This is where I see the threat. Although this rearming is only intended for a handful of policemen, it is a policy that can be expanded to mean rearming of the whole Police. It is a leeway in future where the government may decide to have its army, an army of its own. This is leading to the direction already. If we have our own army, what do you expect will happen? We are expecting exactly what is happening in Fiji right now - military coup. They had four military coups after independence.

If certain sections of the police are armed, if they are not happy with government policies and decisions, I am sure they will turn the guns against us. I fear for the lives of many Solomon Islanders who will be affected if that kind of situation happens in the future.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, a policeman armed with guns is developing a confrontational policy which is not in the best interest of a divided Solomon Islands which can only be agglutinate together by reconciliation, peaceful process without the fear of guns, without the fear that the policeman over there might trigger the gun if his interest is violated.

Of course, Mr Speaker, our VIP's need protection, but who is going to kill those VIP's. No, the Governor General is well safe. If you go to the Governor General's residence the fence around his residence is like the famous fence in Cuba called the 'Guantanamo Bay'. All constitutional post holders, I do not think need a security. I do not think their security officers need to be armed with guns. They have no threats. Even my good friend, the Prime

Minister has no threats at all. Mark my words. If this is introduced because of the recent scenario that someone from Australia is planning to assassinate the Prime Minister, I think we may be developing a policy based on 'hearsay' information.

We must audit any information we are getting from the public, information we are getting from our intelligent officers and do the right thing. Therefore, Mr Speaker, I am here on behalf of the people of East Are Are to say that it is not the right time to rearm the police or to rearm any sections of the Police Force. I hope my friend the Prime Minister and the government will seriously reassess their position and support the good intentions of this motion, and do not take it as it is politics. This motion is quite genuine and only this Parliament can make the right judgment. Thank you.

**Mr TAUSINGA:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to participate on the debate of the motion before us. The mover of the motion eloquently and comprehensively advances the arguments for the motion that warrants also the government to reconsider its policy framework that requires rearming of the protection squad of the VIP.

Mr Speaker, I do not propose to talk at length. In fact I do not also propose to elaborate on what had been said by the mover as well as the speaker who has just sat down. But perhaps the motion requires from each individual to possess in themselves in respect to the motion.

Sir, I think this motion is significant not because the government feels that it is appropriate to rearm the protection squad of the VIP, but perhaps because of the need to protect a selected group of the population from external physical threats that potentially exist around them.

The prime logical observation, Mr Speaker, is that the government has failed the existence of this threat hence the interest to rearm the Police Protection Unit of the Prime Minister as well as that of the Governor General. Therefore, as I said, on that context the motion seeks from each individual Members of Parliament and that of their constituency their position on the wisdom of rearming the Police Unit.

No one is totally free from external threats but threats to exist must have a cause, just like all actions and reactions are naturally sparked by causes. So for threats to exist there must be a cause, a cause that gives man the idea to preempt possible consequences that can give rise to protection measures to counter possible execution of physical threats. The mere fact that the government is interested in rearming the Unit relates to us that there are already exists potential threats that require us to agree to rearm the Unit.

Of course, as a matter of security, it would not be possible for the government to disclose the threats nor would it be wise for the government to advise us from where these threats may have come from. In the absence of such information, the public is left to speculate the existence of these threats.

Are these threats real or are these threats exist in the imagination of a few in the government. What have these people committed that necessitates the rearming of the Unit? Are there other peaceful ways to counter these potential threats rather than rearming the Unit? Is there are a cause that gives rise to the threats?

These are questions whose answers can help us assess the situation that can further help us to determine the genuineness of the rearming of the Unit, and to put in place appropriate measures that may not necessarily require rearming.

Mr Speaker, I do realize that the Unit that the government talks about for the purpose of rearming is only a handful, and the government had said this to the media and to the country. Indeed the public knows it.

Mr Speaker, the concern is the arming of the Unit. Whilst I appreciate the right of the government to decide who to arm and who not to arm, I somewhat fail to see the wisdom of the idea of rearming to that of sovereignty as the basis of the decision.

The first test to this exercise, Mr Speaker, is the ethnic tension that the country has experienced in 1999 to 2000 and the most recent one in 2006 was the Black Tuesday of April 2006. Although the Black Tuesday of April 2006 might be unknown un-riotous behavior and mostly burning and looting, it would have been different should guns are

accessible to the riotous or to the Police Force. But perhaps that of importance is the armed conflict of 1999 and 2000 that saw the sorrow of the country, the tears of the mothers and the children that run dry. The rearming of the Unit will be a reminder of the painful memories to those whose fathers, uncles and sons were lost in the conflict.

The moment we allow arms to be reintroduced in some quarters of the country, we are allowing people to reengage in homemade production of arms and those who are still in possession of arms hidden away somewhere will find comfort and will also use them for their own protection.

Mr Speaker, our good Lord was surrounded by his disciples but from the disciples came the betrayal, and from the disciples the Master was sold. How secure are you in arming the Unit?

The second test, Mr Speaker, is public opinion. Leaders of this beautiful country of ours Solomon Islands are not unaware of the implication that rearming of the Unit has. The public does not agree and they have reasons, and amongst those reasons, the mothers and the children of this country have had enough of the sorrow that befell the nation. The rearming of the Unit is an unwelcome proposition of the people of the country.

If leaders of the country are concern about their protection, if leaders of this country are concern about their security, if leaders of this country are concern about their freedom then what about the protection, the security, and the freedom of the ordinary people. Are we more important than them?

Finally, Mr Speaker, I wish to correct the assumption of rearming the Police Protective Squad. Mr Speaker, our Police Protective Squad has never been armed. These Police escorts, I have never seen them with guns or batons. I have never seen them in possession of guns and escorting Prime Ministers and Governor Generals in the last 22 years. Therefore, we are not rearming them but rather we are now arming them, a reintroduction of arms to the country again.

Mr Speaker, I hope with this brief contribution, you can clearly guess my position in respect of the motion. That position is also

the position of my constituency as well as that of the Solomon Islands Party for Rural Advancement.

Mr Speaker, I beg to support.

**Mr HAOMAE:** Mr Speaker, I shall be very brief. First of all, Mr Speaker, I would like to sincerely thank the Honorable Leader of the Opposition for bringing this important motion to Parliament. I shall be speaking on behalf of the 20,000 people on Small Malaita.

Mr Speaker, we, in Small Malaita do not question the government's prerogative and right of rearming the police force. But the people of Small Malaita questioned or are concern about the government's policy to rearm the police force or part of it at this time.

I understand the government's policy that down the track we can rearm the police when the time is right. I am not questioning the government policy on the rearmament per se, but what I am concerned about on behalf of my people is the rearming of the police force at this point in time. Is it the right time? I say it is untimely

Mr Speaker, the government's policy is just to rearm the Protection Unit of the Prime Minister and the Governor General and I think some units like the PFF and the RRU which were anticipated to be reinstated.

Mr Speaker, this policy reminds me of a story I heard when I was in primary school. The story is about a camel and his master going into the desert. Where the desert is, I was not told at that time, and so it could be in Arabia, Sahara or Arizona. But it is a story about a camel and his master. When they reach the place the master erected his tent. He left the poor camel outside the tent because he thought the camel's place is outside. During the night there was rain and storm and so the camel staying outside felt very bad. The camel went to his master and said he is very cold because there was heavy rain and wind outside so can you please just allow my head to go inside the tent. The master said no, your place is outside, do not come inside even your head is not allowed to be inside the tent. The camel went outside and I think about five seconds later he came knocking again on his master asking him just to put his head or nose into tent. So his master said only the nose can

be put inside the tent. About five seconds later, the camel said put my head inside the tent too. So his master allowed the camel to put his head inside the tent. In the next five minutes the camel again asked his master to also put his neck inside the tent. Then after five minutes the camel also wants two of his legs to go inside the tent. So the story says in the end the camel went right through inside his master's tent and kicked his master outside the tent in the desert and occupied his master's tent.

This discriminate rearmament of the Prime Minister's Protection Unit first and then others later on is going to be like this story. This group first and then another one later and another one later will be like this camel who in the end kicked his master outside in the wind and rain and dust too because it is a desert and the camel occupied the tent. This policy reminds me of that story. And mark my words, Mr Speaker, it will like that. Mark the words of the Member of Parliament for Small Malaita on this government policy if he is still around this floor of Parliament.

Mr Speaker, what should be the priority of the government is the question we should be asking. We have in front of us the review of RAMSI under the Facilitation Act. I think the report is due in July this year. It is the government that delays it otherwise we should have debated it last June so that we can sort these things out in a systematic and comprehensive manner, and not in piecemeal because it is reflecting a wider broad view of the people of this nation. Why the hurry?

Also Mr Speaker, in talking about priority there is also the review of RAMSI that was submitted by our Prime Minister in Suva at the South Pacific Forum. The first meeting as reported in the media will be sometimes next week. Why should we not wait for the review so that we can systematically and comprehensively have a policy formulated in regards to this issue?

Mr Speaker, speaking as a former Minister for Police and National Security in the trying times of this nation, I was a Minister of Police and National Security of my honorable colleague the Prime Minister. I have no personal thing against the Prime Minister and the government. I am speaking in terms of policy, and also in the interest, the public

interest of the people of this country and 20,000 people of Small Malaita.

In my view, Mr Speaker, the priority now is to build up the capability of the police force and improve the conditions of services of the disciplined forces. If we do not look after our disciplined forces by improving their conditions of service, they will trouble us. That should be the priority, and not guns or rearmament. That is wrong, and is not the right priority.

The Government's priority should be to implement the capability strategy and the plan in place in the Ministry of Police and National Security at this point in time. Improve police housing here in Honiara and the rural areas as well as throughout the breath of the four corners of this country. Security is our number one priority at this time.

Mr Speaker, if any problem happens now the frontline will be the Guadalcanal Province. It has happened last time. I am not issuing any threat, Mr Speaker, but I want to impress on my colleagues from this Island to think carefully about the potentiality that are embraced in this policy formulation.

It is the policy of the people of Small Malaita to be honest and truthful and that is why I am saying this to you. Mr Speaker, we come through the front door and not the backdoor or the side door or the windows.

Mr Speaker, the people of this nation have spoken through a number of organizations. We have heard their views through the churches, through SICA - the Solomon Islands Christian Association, the National Council of Woman, the Solomon Islands Council of Trade Unions and the Civil Societies. To say that these organizations are not representing the views of our people or are not representing our people, I really cannot understand. If we discount that those are not representatives of the views of the people throughout the four corners of the country then God bless Solomon Islands.

Mr Speaker, I agree with the Member of Parliament for North New Georgia that there must be a cause emanating from that then there will be a threat. In any country in the world, threat only comes outside or it comes from within. From outside, who are we fearing? I cannot see much threat from outside.

We have developed a very close relationship with our Melanesian brother - Papua New Guinea that has had a little bit of spill over effects of its situation on our border on the Western side. We have developed a very close and good working relationship with them and so I do not think any threat would come from there.

Mr Speaker, I do not foresee any threat that will come from within too, not discounting the fact that the government may have been privy to certain information that will encourage them to formulate this policy. Information that has national security implications or secret ones, I am not privy to those. But I can say that I cannot see any threats. Because the Bible says that if you live by the sword you shall also die by the sword.

Mr Speaker, the people of Small Malaita join other people throughout the country in advising the government that you have the right to rearming the police. The prerogative of that right belongs to the sovereign government and nobody is questioning that, not even the MP who is now on floor of Parliament this time.

What people are concerned about and are questioning the policy is its timing. They are saying it is untimely, and I totally and unreservedly agree with that view. That is what this motion is saying, and so I really agree with it. That is what the motion is saying and I cannot vote against my own conscience and against the conscience of my people, the hereditary high chiefs of Small Malaita and hence I totally support the motion.

**Sir KEMAKEZA:** Mr Speaker, I too would like to contribute to this very important motion for only one reason. Before doing so, I would like to thank the Leader of Opposition for tabling this motion of the people of Solomon Islands. This motion is theirs

The role of the Opposition or the Leader for that matter Mr Speaker, is to advise the government or warn the government against its actions so that it looks carefully in terms of policy or something like this so that it guiding him. He is like a watchdog. Mr Speaker, you know this yourself as you have been a Leader of Opposition and a Prime Minister many times.

Sir, what I would like to say on this motion is that I stand also to support this motion

for my people of Savo/Russells. My people tell me that rearming the police force is not right at this time. So I talk on their behalf in here. I am representing them in this honorable House. Even some people of some Ministers also tell me that they do not support it, and so I am talking on behalf of the Ministers too.

*(laughter)*

I am not joking here. So it is a decision of individual Members who are representing our people who have felt, seen, heard and some died of guns.

Even the great country of the United States of America is using guns to kill small children in schools. I heard this always, every year. Some Presidents in the world and Prime Ministers were even shot by their bodyguards. So it should be for and against.

As a former police officer, my real profession is providing protection services to the VIPs. The MP for North New Georgia has said that when I provided protection services to the Governor General before I was not armed. Why should I be armed? I was not armed because there is no threat. I endorse that point by the MP for North New Georgia. The arms were used as and when required and when faced with a serious situation. The arms were just stored away rotting in the armory and during the ethnic tension all the guns were stolen.

To start thinking about rearmament is not right. I think we should just listen to our people in the country. This country has not come half way yet in its normalcy, and so every one of us leaders in this House must understand it.

In terms of policy I was the Deputy Prime Minister of the same Prime Minister and our policy at that time is gun free and that is why three disarmaments happened when you, Mr Speaker, were the Chairman of the National Peace Council and you carried out that government policy to make Solomon Islands gun free.

We have been trying to carry out this policy whereby three amnesty bills did not work until the last government did the last disarmament until RAMSI arrived before every gun were returned. But some people are saying that some guns are still there. The guns that are

still hidden away will look like the Second World War guns now in the ground. But if we start rearming this time the guns that are hidden will come out.

Do you know, Mr Speaker, that when people at home heard the government importing guns they will think it is free to own guns and they will think to have the guns and so more guns will come.

I am surprised that my good Prime Minister is against a policy of his previous administration. Whatever makes him to have this thinking, I do not know. But I can draw one conclusion here. The Prime Minister wrote a letter, and this is according to a report, to RAMSI asking RAMSI Security Officers to leave his premises and then he asks the Cabinet to approve his policy of getting guns for his Close Protection Unit. This to me is an indirect action of eliminating RAMSI. That is the bottom line.

The MP for Small Malaita likens this action to the story of the camel. But I am going to give a different picture. Bit by bit of it goes out. The next move, the next bit to go out will be the army. It started off with the removal of the High Commissioner, and not accepting a new High Commissioner to present his credentials. Next the Protection Unit was removed and then you would like to rearm the police officers.

One warning here, Mr Speaker, if this Protection Unit does not use the guns to kill the VIPs, it would be another man from outside who will come and get the gun and shoot them. Let me give you a good example. The policeman guarding the Prime Minister's residence and the Governor General's residence are only human beings. They are human beings just like you and me. If you go to the Guard House at 2 o'clock or 3 o'clock in the morning you will see the rifles just lying down on the other side, and the policeman snoring away. If I would like to kill the Prime Minister I can just go and take the gun and shoot him. So it is quite dangerous. It can happen both ways.

I know the Prime Minister is a karate man and so anyone going close to him is going to die first before him. So you do not need guns. If it is a stone it will hit the wall and then goes back. But with a gun, it is different. The bullet

will go through the wall, reaches you and then fly to the other side and can more people on the other side. That is how gun works. So let us not play round with something that can backfire on us, if not through security officers then through somebody else.

The concern of the people of this nation is because they have seen and experienced what has already happened yesterday. But we slept last night and then woke up today and totally forget what happened yesterday.

That is the big worry of many of our people and also my worry. Issuing guns is very easy, it can be done within seconds but getting back the guns is very hard, because we have been trying our best to do that for the last five to six years. Only homemade weapons were handed in but where are the SR88 guns. They hid them until RAMSI arrived before they were handed in.

Another way is, the same guns the Prime Minister wanted can be used to topple his government. This has happened in Fiji and surely it can happen here, may be in a much smaller way because what happened in Fiji is much bigger, but it can happen here. Why, Mr Speaker? Because even though you are a katukatu man (small person) but when you are in possession of a gun you can kill thousands of people. But when there is no gun if you come I can face you because I am a man too. That is what it is.

When a man holds a gun it would seem like he owns the whole world. He marches up and down demanding \$20,000 and when that happens, only people who have money will give it because it is between life and death. But that has happened. Some people use the gun for survival and some use the gun to kill other people. So it can happen because we are only human beings.

The last point is that there are still differences amongst the Royal Solomon Islands Police. I want the Minister to take note of this. Sort out these differences first by putting the Royal Solomon Islands Police in order and get the Force back to the days when I served the Force before because those of us who were policemen before are brothers.

Also there is no armory down there to keep those arms. The armory is now used as an

office because it was broken into when people stole the guns. So where are you going to store the guns? Are you going to store them in the houses or in the boots of cars or in the Prime Minister's residence? That can be quite dangerous and can be abused and misused. Those are the dangers that we should be aware of.

I do not want to repeat what the Leader of Opposition has said and other speakers because they have spoken on behalf of other organizations throughout the country. I heard them on the radio whilst driving up here. For me, the danger of the gun is what I am concerned about, and I represent the people of Savo/Russells who do not agree to this rearming. So hold on to it because the right time might come.

With those, I support the motion.

**Mr KENGAVA:** Mr Speaker, thank you for allowing me to contribute briefly. Seeing that no one from the government side would like to respond, let the Opposition continue its advice and warning to the government.

Mr Speaker, speaking also as a representative of the people at the border in North West Choiseul, representing people who have just experienced the Bougainville Crisis from the fear of guns coming from outside and also the experiences of the ethnic tensions from the use of guns within the country, I think I have the right to also mention that inline with the motion that probably rearming of the police or part of the police at present is untimely.

We must not forget, Mr Speaker, that those experiences are still fresh in our minds. I am surprised how quick the people of this country especially the women could recall the ethnic tension days as soon as they heard the government's policy of rearming part of the police force.

Mr Speaker, from my own experiences down at the border during the Bougainville Crisis, our fear was of guns from outside coming into the country. During the ethnic tension the guns from within, and I could tell you that the guns from within Solomon Islands resulted in two deaths in Choiseul Province. One happened within my constituency and another one in South

Choiseul Constituency, lest we forget those two incidents.

I think the fear from outside and the fear from within can arise when we know we are not in a state where we can control arms in the country. But the question of sovereignty is the right of every one of us and it cannot be questioned.

Mr Speaker, I want to emphasize that whilst we might find reasons to bring in arms or rearm part of the police because of the sovereign right of our nation, let us not forget that sovereignty does not belong to the government of the day nor does it belong to the Opposition but it belongs to the very people we are representing in this Parliament.

Sovereignty belongs to the men, women, children and old people. So we must listen to their calls, we must listen to their desires and we must listen to their voices. It is their sovereignty that we are defending and not our own, and therefore the place where this sovereignty is protected is right here in this chamber, the Parliament?

The Cabinet is carrying out responsibilities vested on it by this Parliament. Today this Parliament is now considering a policy that probably would jeopardize the sovereignty that we talked so much about.

Mr Speaker, I would like to call on all of us who are representatives of our people in this chamber that each individual MP must make his own decision. Listen to the inner voices of the people in your constituencies. Put aside policies, party politics, personal interests, foreign interests and friend's interests. Listen to the voice of your people, as I am now listening to the voice of my people and I am supporting this motion.

The sovereignty of this nation can only be threatened two ways as raised by the colleague MP for South Malaita. It can be either from outside or from within. Therefore, it is very important to remind ourselves that at the moment I do not think we are ready to rearm the police because we could threaten the peace within and amongst ourselves.

Rearming as raised by the Leader of the Opposition Mr Speaker, at this present time would be seen as a premature action. Why? I start to think that the very existence of the

Facilitation Act of 2003 permits RAMSI to disarm our militants. It was not for any reasons but for the sake of peace, law and order as desired by our children, our women and the youths of yesterday and today. Therefore, any rearmament of the Police Force in my view, Mr Speaker, will need us revisiting the Facilitation Act either for us to repeal it, replace it or amend it in order to allow us to rearm the police in the presence of RAMSI in the country.

Mr Speaker, we need to do that first because we cannot just rearm the Police whilst the Facilitation Act is in place in this country allowing RAMSI to be in the country. This is the point I would like to raise here.

Rearming now will mean three things, in my opinion, on behalf of my people. First it could be violating the Facilitation Act which allows us to be a gun free nation for the time being. Secondly, if the government unilaterally rearms part of the Police then we are not completing the RAMSI project yet. Thirdly, we could be ignoring the decision made by Parliament which agreed to that Facilitation Act that mandates RAMSI to take guns away from our people in order for us to have peace. .

Mr Speaker, the RAMSI project is not over yet. It is in fact a project consisting of many parts, and the Government in my view needs to cooperate more with RAMSI and not confrontational in order to resolve some misunderstandings and the opportunities coming soon when the RAMSI will be reviewed. In the meantime, we should use RAMSI to rebuild the Police Force until such a time when we are ready to rearm the Force.

The fear of my people is that any unilateral rearming of the Solomon Islands Police Force or part of it will undermine the presence of RAMSI in this country. I am sure that RAMSI will not be prepared to live in a state which is threatened. There is no doubt that as soon as RAMSI leaves I could foresee two scenarios in this country. Firstly, the country could return once again to a state where there is lack of law and order or lack of security and thus people would live in fear. Secondly, we could be in a scenario, which is the likely one, where the country under the mandate of the Constitution, the government uses its police to control and force its citizens to follow policies

of the government. In short, Mr Speaker, we could be living in a police state. The first to be in the Pacific.

Sir, with those comments I would like to touch briefly on security before I conclude. I think security is a need for all of us and not only the national government. I think we also need to give protection to premiers of provinces too if we are to give protection to the Prime Minister and the VIPs. If that is so, can we allow the provinces to revive the area constables and rearm them too so that they can protect premiers in the provinces and the speakers of assemblies? The argument can go on just like that Mr Speaker. This is the situation we must avoid Mr Speaker?

What guarantee is the Government going to give the people at the border in North West Choiseul and the Shortlands in making sure there are no guns smuggled into the country as soon as we start arming the police in Solomon Islands? What guarantee are you going to give in patrolling and securing the border once RAMSI leaves prematurely, Mr Speaker? These are the questions we must put in mind, and that is why it was rightly put by the Opposition Leader that rearming part of the Police is premature. We are not yet prepared to protect our very own shores.

Before I resume my seat, I would like to raise three points: First, on behalf of my people I would like to ask the Government to listen to the voice of the people on this particular issue. We must look carefully and the best thing to do now is to shelve the plan of rearming the police for the time being. Work with RAMSI to help the Solomon Islands Police to redevelop and be prepared at the time when they will be rearmed accordingly. If we argue this is a policy for the interest of this nation, I should like this nation to have a chance to make their voices heard through a national referendum.

Secondly, the International Community is watching listening to us now wanting to see whether Solomon Islands will pursue the road of peace or the road of anxiety and fear.

Mr Speaker, with those comments on behalf of my people, I also ask the government to withdraw its intention of rearming the Police Protection Unit.

With these comments, Mr Speaker, I support the motion.

**Hon SOFU:** Mr Speaker, thank for giving me this opportunity to briefly contribute on this very important motion.

Mr Speaker, in doing so, first of all I would like to thank the Leader of Opposition and Member of Parliament for Central Kwara'ae for moving this motion for deliberation on this floor of Parliament.

Mr Speaker, the very important thing we must not forget is that Solomon Islands is a sovereign nation of which improving, strengthening and maintaining national security is very vital to its long term security.

Mr Speaker, the majority of Solomon Islanders may think negative of the need to rearm the Special Unit of the Police Force because of the events of year 2000 when arms were used to endanger the lives of civilians. Mr Speaker, I do not deny the fact that arms held under the security of the police were stolen and used during the ethnic tension period.

Mr Speaker, the armory was broken into not by police officers but by ordinary Solomon Islanders which has resulted in arms ending in wrong hands.

Mr Speaker, the unmet provinces of the good people of Solomon Islands has led to the break down of law and order in Solomon Islands, one of the many political crises in the Pacific.

Mr Speaker, arms carried around by Police officers during that time were done in good manner and to serve one purpose, which was to ease finance during the period of the tension.

Mr Speaker, police officers who were armed during the tension period had carried out their assigned responsibilities to curb the rising criminal activities that occurred just everywhere around the city and on the outskirts of the city boundary.

Mr Speaker, the problem with the use of guns had just increased when some of our respected leaders took advantage of the weak law and order situation and used police officers and ordinary Solomon Islanders for their gains.

Mr Speaker, it would then be improper to say that our police officers are unprofessional and unreliable to have access to arms while their

actions throughout the tension period were done upon directives from the corporate level.

Mr Speaker, the ethnic tension and the breakdown of law and order in Solomon Islands had given us lessons to formulate best strategies and measures to make Solomon Islands a safer place for everyone to live and at the same time protect the country's national security.

Mr Speaker, our good people of Solomon Islands tend to look at one side of the coin when looking at this arms issue. However, they fail to look beyond the horizon where threats to insecurity and weak security protection would be a danger to a sovereign country such as Solomon Islands.

The events of April 18<sup>th</sup> 2006 was a clear indication of how incapable a foreign force tries to handle law and order problem in Solomon Islands, and this could apply everywhere in the world. The very important thing in handling such situations is understanding the Solomon Islands' cultures and how problems can be dealt with in such a manner.

Mr Speaker, my fear here is the long term sustainability of Solomon Islands national security. The presence of RAMSI in Solomon Islands is not disputed. RAMSI has done a very good job in bringing back law and order in this country. However, Mr Speaker, the rearming of the Special Unit of the Police Force is one way for Solomon Islands to regain its strength in national security, which has been weakened during the civil unrest.

For the vital purpose of strengthening national security, I do not see any reason for RAMSI and my good people of Solomon Islands to have a pessimistic view on this rearming issue. What the present government is strategically foreseeing is that RAMSI will be here only for a short term and when the contingent leaves, who will provide Solomon Islands required national security services?

Mr Speaker, I feel that it is timely now for the Special Units of the Solomon Islands Police Force to be rearmed and properly trained so that when RAMSI leaves national security will remain intact.

With these few remarks, Mr Speaker I do not render my support to the motion. Thank you and I resume my seat.

**Hon SOALAOI:** Thank you Mr Speaker for allowing me to contribute to the motion. Firstly, I wish to thank the honourable leader of Opposition for tabling the motion. I will be brief.

First of all, I would like to briefly explain what this motion means to the Police Force, as I see it on what some of us leaders have been saying about the government's policy on rearming of the special unit of the Force.

Mr Speaker, this motion is a vote of no confidence by the Opposition on our Police Force. I think it is about time that we start to have confidence in our disciplined force. To continue to say it is dangerous to rearm the special units of our Police Force is a clear sign of no confidence in our own disciplined forces. I believe the Force will agree with me that they cannot even execute specific sections of our law without arms.

Mr Speaker, when we say arms, it is not referring to guns. I think we as leaders need to differentiate when we say arms, it does not necessarily mean arms. At the moment our Force does not even have batons and even shields. I think that was very obvious during the past riot.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, having listened to some of our Members of Parliament representing their people, I want to say here some of us have been misrepresenting our people by passing on wrong information to them.

Mr Speaker, I do not disagree that you speak on behalf of your people but what I want to say is we need to pass on the right information to our people in order not to mislead our people as we need to represent them properly.

Mr Speaker, we cannot rely on another force forever to continue to protect this country or for our security as a sovereign nation. It is quite obvious, Mr Speaker, that even our civil society is coming out against this rearming policy. I think the motion itself begins by misleading people when it says rearming the Police Force.

Mr Speaker, it is not right for us to continue to use the voice of our people as an excuse for this motion because I understand our

people know that they have given us the mandate to decide on their behalf.

Sir, it is not good for us to envisage a negative future as some Members have expressed. I think we as leaders have visions for this country for us to have a prosperous country, a nation that is peaceful and prosperous and that people enjoy living in this nation. If all you see is a negative future, we need to rethink being leaders of our respective constituencies.

Mr Speaker, if you want to continue to mislead our people by passing to them wrong information and telling them to stand up against government policies that is what I call misleading our people. I am not saying that we should rearm the Police Force but I think we need to say the right things in this Chamber.

Mr Speaker, history tells us that reforms even cost lives and for us to continue say there is no risk is a mistake. Presidents of some countries were assassinated because of nothing else but because of introducing reforms. I want to know which country in the world is without any armed unit force. If anybody on the other side can tell me that there is any country in the world without an armed force, I see no reason why we should be jumping up and down with this government's intentions to rearm the special unit.

I guess we all agree that there is no country in the world without an armed unit and to continue to say that we started off without arms and that we are beginning to arm the Force, I think we started off wrongly. We do not say that this country does not rely on God for security. That is not what we are saying. This country has been dedicated to God and we believe also in His guiding arms over this nation. But as a sovereign nation I think it is commonsense that a country needs to be prepared for forces that might arise or for circumstances that may arise due to evil motives.

We know that we fear God but there are things happening around us not only in this country but around the region and even around the world that can endanger the lives of our leaders and even our people.

Just to briefly express my opposition to the motion, I am not saying that we are not listening to our people but our people also need

to know that the information they receive is correct and is right.

As leaders, I want to re-emphasize that it is not proper for us to mislead our people. Somebody said if you do not do the right thing you better rethink or you better resign and if you are confused. I want to say I think it is not good for us to mislead our people. The right thing to do is to reconsider resigning from being a leader.

Sir, it is very sad for me as somebody who has just come into Parliament sitting down and listening to some of our senior leaders saying things in this honourable Chamber that are not correct and right. Our people listening from outside can tell whether these people are telling the truth or are just talking in rumours.

Mr Speaker, before I resume my seat I think the confusion here begins from the wrong information that got to the ears of our people and even the civil societies. Watching the TV last night I was surprised to hear all the speakers during the civil society meeting were talking about guns even saying that seeing a gun will cause people to run into the bush. All these kinds of misleading information are still continuing to be put on the media and even on TV.

Mr Speaker, my only concern is what we are telling the people. Are we telling them the truth as their representative or what future are we foreseeing for this country? You stand here in this honourable Chamber and say that you talk on behalf of our people. The Honorable Member of Parliament needs to check with us before he speaks on our behalf. Even some of the Opposition Members are saying that they are talking on our behalf. I do not accept that.

The understanding now is that this rearming policy is causing a lot of problems this time even with our ordinary citizens. If you walk around town people will ask you, 'why do you want to rearm the Police Force'. The Government is not the rearming the Police Force. It is only talking about rearming the special unit that looks after VIPs.

To me the motion itself starts off as misleading. Like I said we will be the only country in this planet without any armed unit. We need to have confidence in our own disciplined forces and to say giving them guns and they will turn on us, I don't believe on that.

I think our problem is having confidence in them. They are just human beings and if you do not have confidence in them and that is when they turn on you.

Mr Speaker I have a lot of confidence in our own Police Force and I believe we are tired of living with problems and I do not think any police officer in his right mind will think about causing another unrest.

What this motion seeks is straightforward but since it is misleading from the beginning I would like to express my strong opposition to the motion and with that, Mr Speaker, I resume my seat.

**Mr GUKUNA:** Mr Speaker, I stand to express comments or opinions that are totally opposite to what my fellow Outer Islander Member had just expressed. I totally disagree with his views, Mr Speaker, and I thank you for giving me this small time to do so.

I want to make it very clear that I talk on behalf of the people who strongly oppose this idea of rearming this part of the Police. I am not speaking on behalf of Australia and it is not my interest to speak on their behalf in this House.

Mr Speaker, I live where the Prime Minister lives and every morning I drive past and see RAMSI officers I am always happy that my tabu is safe. One morning in December when I drove past I did not see the officers and so I think what is happening. As the weeks went past I can notice that RAMSI officers were no longer there. But anyway it is good to see the Prime Minister still safe, very safe that he does not need the big guns of RAMSI. I was happy but then a little later on I heard the Prime Minister wrote a directive for RAMSI to leave his premises. Then a little bit later on there was news that some people would like to kill the Prime Minister. I said who would want to kill the Prime Minister. I was angry because it is a very bad thing for someone to assassinate a prime minister. If somebody is trying to do this, we should all jump up and down and be concern that our Prime Minister is being targeted.

Just in this Parliament I later learn that there is a government policy to rearm officers in his house. I then realize later the absence of RAMSI and this plot, somehow are these not coincidences. Are these things calculated so that

it gives weight to the idea of rearming the police?

Mr Speaker, when talking about rearming the police it is not about batons, as the Member for Vattu said. Rearming the police, our security is not about batons, some spray, belt and chain. No. Rearming in terms of security is about arms and there is only one definition of arms, and that is guns. Can you ask your Prime Minister to tell me whether he talks about batons or about guns? Do not ask us? We take the motion according to the wording and the English meaning of the word ‘arms.’ This is about guns.

I then said when are they going to kill the Governor General? Mr Speaker, these are supposed to be the two safest persons in this country. These two are supposed to be the safest and there should not be any concern for these two people. They are safe.

There are some communities on Guadalcanal and Malaita who are still being hassled. If we are concern about security these are the people that need guns, these communities that are still being hassled but not the Prime Minister nor the Governor General.

I then think why is the Prime Minister afraid? Why is he so scared? He seems to forget the impact that guns did to this country. He has no fear of guns.

Let me remind you, Mr Speaker, that his government came through the barrel of the gun. So does he want security or he wants the guns? If he wants security why did he kick RAMSI out when RAMSI provides the best security for him. When you talk about life and death I believe that should supersede the issue of sovereignty and the government policy of rearming the police.

I wonder where this policy is coming from, may I ask. How can the Ministers, people who are affected directly by guns agreed to this policy? Where were you when this policy came up Mr Speaker, may I ask? Did the Ministers actually pass this policy? You Members from Guadalcanal, did you actually allow this policy to be implemented?

Mr Speaker, there are so many policies in this country that are doing nothing which we have bended and breached. Why is this policy so important?

Mr Speaker, on the question of rearming, it has been expressed is a matter of

time. Our concern really is the timing. It is not a matter of expressing our confidence or disapproval on the police. Our concern is that this policy is a bit too early. I beg the government to shelve this policy. Put it aside. If there is such thing as a policy because if you put this into place and if you enforce it what will stop you from coming up with another policy that is against our commonsense.

Policies must make commonsense. We are supposed to be talking about a policy that enhances the lives of our people. That is what policy is supposed to be. It was not meant for us to abuse the policy and implement it, pushing some ideas that totally make no sense.

The fact that guns do have the potential to cause a lot of problems in this country, we must also think about the security officers who will be holding those guns.

Mr Speaker, there are a lot of guns in this country that are in the hands of RAMSI military. The proposal to give guns to the Prime Minister's guards is like exposing these people to the military power of RAMSI. You better not underestimate the strength of the military presence of RAMSI. They will now have to be careful. They will from now on know that some police are holding guns. But let me remind you, Mr Speaker, and with due respect to our officers who are working out there it was the police that allowed the guns to go out. Those guns are theirs so why did they not keep them? In fact there are allegations that police officers helped in bringing out those guns.

Investors are watching this issue because this is the very issue that has caused a lot of threat to them.

Mr Speaker, it has been alluded to and somebody briefly touched on it that the people who caused a lot of problems in the last ethnic tension, the people holding the guns are just our friends, wantoks and brothers. We know each other very well. But do you remember what they did?

As the Member for Savo/Russells said, if they have the guns they will do anything. Some of our friends killed their own friends. One village shot at each other. That is what guns can do. We may have the best of motives. We may think very clear but you will never know. No one ever imagined before that that the

armory will come out to public. No one ever imagined that the armory will be taken out by the police. But it happened because until we eliminate greed uncertainty is always there.

Let me just say this. Mr Speaker, that the people who stand to oppose this motion are people who stand to benefit from guns. They are people who have benefited from guns. Those of us who have not benefited from guns totally oppose the introduction of guns. It is simply in our opinion and my opinion premature.

This motion is just a motion. It has been clarified by you, Mr Speaker, and thank you for clearing it to us, and so it is up to you to act on it or to just ignore it. But we are presenting this opportunity to each one of us in this House to make a stand.

We are not very concern if you oppose it because you have the number. But our people outside are listening in to you. They are going to listen to your votes on whether you support it or not. My colleague from Vattu and myself are from the eastern outer islands and as soon as the guns come out we are going to runaway. Those of you living in the mainland are going to fight yourselves. Is that right my colleague?

We should not be more concerned about this issue but for national interest and for the interest of activities that are going on right now and the need to consolidate confidence in this country, I think rearming is untimely and I want to thank the Member for Central Kwara'ae for bringing this motion to this House.

In closing I want to express my strong support for this motion and that of my people, the people of Rennell and Bellona.

**Mr PACHA:** Mr Speaker, I stand here to speak for and on behalf of my people of South Guadalcanal.

In my short contribution, firstly I would like to thank my good Leader of the Opposition for moving this motion in this House.

Mr Speaker, the history of the 90s and early 2000 is still fresh in the minds of my people as well as the people of the whole island of Guadalcanal because the bulk of the happenings in the late 90s and early 2000 happened on the soils of Guadalcanal. So what happened is still fresh in our minds. I do not

know why things like that happened may be because the Second World War also ended here and that is why things like this are happening here.

Mr Speaker, in my home in the Weather Coast they are still talking about the RRU and the joint operations until today. All these are referring to guns. They still talk about the deployment of the patrol boat until today. It is still fresh and live in their minds. Even the removal of arms from the armory is not done by ordinary people of Solomon Islands but by a well organized operation called the joint paramilitary operation and so we cannot blame it on ordinary people. It was a well organized operation, and police officers were also involved.

Mr Speaker, less than three weeks ago I was in my constituency in an ongoing attempt to negotiate reconciliation for South Guadalcanal, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the government for its help in facilitating this consultation meeting for reconciliation.

But like I said the other day we were right in the middle of talking about reconciliation when the media came out with this rearming issue, and it really polluted the atmosphere on the other side and everything was ruined. That is why I raised the question and my question still stands, which one comes first. Do you want us to rearm or reconcile first. You tell it straight to us so that we do not waste our time talking about reconciliation.

*(hear, hear)*

Mr Speaker, our people out there do not have the same level of understanding like we do inside this chamber. We are not giving wrong information to them, but it is how they interpret the information themselves. When they heard the issue of gun coming out in the media they mean it themselves. So we are not giving any wrong information to them.

The understanding of people out there is not the same with us in here on how we understand things. No matter how much we explain it they will not and they will never accept it. Our people cannot distinguish the difference between guns and pistols and whether it is SR or M16 or Point 22. They do not know

what these guns are. They do not know which one is small, big and which one has power and which one does not have power. But as long as they hear guns it is guns to them.

Mr Speaker, I think the Facilitation Act passed in this Parliament should be enough to maintain security and law and order for the time being until there is a national and meaningful reconciliation.

Mr Speaker, may I suggest here that reconciliation comes first before we go into talking about rearming.

Mr Speaker, if it is true that reconciliation is the priority of the government then I wonder why this talk about reconciliation is not hot. It is not a hot agenda of these days. Instead the talk about rearming, the suspended attorney general and other issues that are not helpful to our people are dominating discussions.

Mr Speaker, as I said I will contribute very briefly, and with these few remarks I wholeheartedly support this very outstanding motion.

*(applause)*

**Hon AGOVAKA:** Mr Speaker, I too would like to contribute briefly on this motion moved by the honorable Leader of the Opposition, MP for Central Kwara'ae.

I stand here as the Member of Parliament for Central Guadalcanal Constituency and I represent their voice here in Parliament.

The rearmament as my colleague of South Guadalcanal has said sent wrong messages to our people on Guadalcanal. Despite how much we explain, despite how much we can put this policy in place to make it look safe, our people still think it is rearming of the police force.

Mr Speaker, the people of Central Guadalcanal Constituency have expressed to me their concerns of our intention to rearm a same unit of the police force, the Protection Unit.

I look at this issue, Mr Speaker, as having two components. The first component is that we need to protect our Prime Minister as well as our Governor General hence the rearming of the Protective Unit. These two

persons in this country are very vital and very important in government and as representative of Her Majesty here in the country. That, Mr Speaker, I have no problem with. The second component is that of the fear of the people in rearming this small unit.

For Members of Guadalcanal, if we are to support this motion, it could mean having repercussions not only on us as Members of Parliament but our families and ourselves.

Last week Mr Speaker, I had a meeting with the Premier of Guadalcanal Province and his executive in Honiara, and as much as I tried to explain the rearmament and our policy to them, they still could not get it. I would like to relate to the floor of this House what the Premier and his executive have said to me.

*The Guadalcanal Provincial Government has strongly expressed to me that they do not support the rearming of the VIP officers. That is the message I would like to relay here today.*

Mr Speaker, the trigger-happy gun-sliding days of 1999 and 2000 is very much fresh and vivid in the minds of our people here in Guadalcanal, especially my people of Central Guadalcanal. Mr Speaker, there are incidents that happened, incidents that we can relate to you that we have written to the previous government for compensation of some people who have been shot up at Gold Ridge, and these things still agitate our people, and if we are to rearm a sector of our police force it can only mean to me that my people do not support this policy, and they will not support this policy.

Mr Speaker, the motion by the Leader of the Opposition came at the right time and I think we have to seriously reconsider our stand and we have to seriously reconsider whether it is timely that we should rearm our people, our VIP officers or should we wait until things are settled.

We have a lot of things to do for our people, Mr Speaker, such as reconciliation, issue of land, the Guadalcanal bona fide demands, these issues have been put into place as a matter of policy by the government and we are working on it. The government is working on reconciliation, it is working on returning land to

our people and it is working on the economy of our country.

Mr Speaker, I will be brief on this issue and the main point why I would like to stand and contribute is to pass on the message from the Premier of Guadalcanal Province and his executive on the floor of Parliament that they do not support the move by the government to rearm the police force or the personnel VIP officers.

With these, Mr Speaker, I resume my seat.

**Mr TOZAKA:** Mr Speaker, I am very pleased and thank you very much for allowing me to contribute briefly on this very important motion courageously moved by the Honorable Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Central Kwara'ae.

At the outset on behalf of my chiefs and people of North Vella, I have no hesitation in supporting this motion for the Grand Coalition for Change Government not to introduce rearming of the police personnel or the RSIP in whatever size, shape and quantity.

Sir, having said this, I also would like to clarify where this motion comes from apart from the fact that undoubtedly this motion comes from the people who do not want at this stage, at this point in time to rearm our RSIP.

One analogy Mr Speaker, has already been dramatically explained by my two colleagues of Small Malaita and Russells/Savo about a camel and tent. There is another analogy, Mr Speaker, from a scientific point of view on the organizational side. This helps us to understand each other on conflict and on issues of this nature that affects public policy.

This analogy goes like this. There are three specific windows, which through one window we can see each other, we can understand each other on this gun issue and why it has been disallowed and so on. We know about that.

There is another window, which is a close window to one individual and open to the other. For example, on the other side it is very clear to you how you see me from your side but I am blind and I cannot see you on that side.

The third one is a window that is very clear from my side but you are blind to see my side from that side.

There is another fourth window, Mr Speaker, and that fourth window is that both of us are blind. So the job of the Opposition (this side) is to help the other side to see what we see from this side and that is exactly where we come from in this particular public policy change.

The honorable Member for Savo/Russells said in his debate to the Appropriation Bill 2007 yesterday that we seem to be having a problem or we seem to be having a syndrome to forget the past, especially the traumatic events that caused our country to go down on its knees to request outside help to disarm those who are supposed to be enforcing law and order and protecting our citizens including our leaders, turned against the state under the barrel of the gun.

Mr Speaker, we even have forgotten that we actually lost our sovereignty in the hands of those with guns. Meaning the Cabinet at that point of time and Parliament; the two fundamental authorities in our land representing our sovereignty in our country, were paralyzed due to total collapse of law and order at that point in time.

When we asked for outside help and RAMSI stepped into our shores three years ago, it disarmed people with guns and brought to justice those who are responsible. Almost 4,000 guns were collected and destroyed, security was introduced and hope given back to our people. In other words, the sovereignty that we lost was given back to us by outside people. So the sovereignty that we are talking about is in your hand and in my hand right now.

Mr Speaker, the Regional Mission in Solomon Islands came to help us because we asked for them at that point in time we were unable to look after ourselves. The luxuries we had from this Mission are meeting the cost of situations that we are unable to meet from our budget.

The question here is, can we take this opportunity at this point in time whilst they are here and are meeting all these costs from their own budget, to use our Solomon Islands resources so that we work with them by looking at the needs that we failed to do in the past

because we failed to properly and correctly govern ourselves and address those structural and capacity issues in our development.

If this Mission at the moment is carrying out this responsibility on behalf of the government, on behalf of our people, security and responsibility, I would have thought to be saying very good, do that and I will be responsible on this side, meaning we are serving money here. But there seems to be the question that we are no longer working in good terms with them now. Something is wrong.

My view, Mr Speaker, is that we should be sitting together with them. There should be more dialogue with this Mission, dialogue on areas that we are still not happy about on how this Mission is carrying them out.

I am very pleased, Mr Speaker, that through the government, I am sure it brought the point to the attention of the Pacific Islands Forum by the Prime Minister himself, and there is a review taking place right now. I am very pleased about that and I congratulate the government for that. Those are the avenues that will help us address issues like this.

As other colleagues have already spoken Mr Speaker, our people have spoken very strongly and clearly about their objection to the government's intention of rearming the police. The civil society has spoken, led by the Solomon Islands Christian Association, the women have spoken and the trade unions have spoken. Therefore, if we are responsible for our people, if we are responsible for people who are very concerned about this and we are their representatives in this honorable house, then I see no reason why we should listen to them and follow their request not to go ahead with the intention of rearming our police.

Mr Speaker, other colleagues have already spoken that it is not timely. The time is not right. The time is not yet right for our people to have guns. It will create a lot of mistrusts. Others have said that also and I support it.

Given our vulnerable situation anything could happen to derail the present law and order situation which you and I are enjoying at this present time. Hence the wisest thing is to leave things as they are at the moment, and we work together in trying to maintain harmonious

relationships between our islands, to live in peace in our islands under the present arrangement.

We are so lucky, and our country is a beautiful country. Everybody says that Solomon Islands is a beautiful country and we have potentials. We have manpower potential, who said we don't have it? We have resources. We just need time.

Mr Speaker, we are at the stage of rebuilding our country at this time. Our country has fallen down. The house has fallen down and so you and I have to stand up and rebuild our house, our country.

Sir, our priorities must be right, and I have looked at the priorities of the government in its policy here. It is very clear here that their priority now should be, apart from the economy, continue to promote and strengthen the ongoing reconciliation and peace process to make this nation strong, to enhance nation building and unity is very important.

As the MP for Aoke/Langa Langa said, our hope is in our diversity being mindful of the fact that we have 80 languages, mindful of the fact that we have nine provinces, mindful of the fact that we come from different islands, and so our hope is in our diversity, our unity in diversity. That is a very challenging thing for us. This is the time for us to work together consolidating this unity amongst our people.

Mr Speaker, I know the Minister is going to speak. I know he is a very capable Minister wanting to do things in his Ministry. That is good. That is a good sign. He wants to move his Ministry. He wants to implement policies of his Ministry. It is good that on this very important point we are helping each other to share this message that our people in our villages, our people in town including ourselves are saying to the government through the responsible ministry that you should wait until the time is right.

Sir, use all the avenues that are in your hand as a government to address this situation in a way that will improve the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force. Perhaps, the area suggested by the MP for Small Malaita, the structural issue, strengthening of the Force, improving their condition of services, the welfare of the Force in the provinces and in

urban centres. Those are the things that I see as very important that needs addressing.

Mr Speaker, I am happy to note that the Office of the Prime Minister in his press statement yesterday was certain of this. The Prime Minister is aware of these and has put a leadership touch on this already and I am very pleased with him for the good work and the partnership between the government and RAMSI, and that they are going to dialogue. They are dialoguing with the Mission to address this security issue concerning the government.

Mr Speaker, with these few remarks, I support the motion.

*(applause)*

**Mr ZAMA:** Mr Speaker, I will be very brief in my contribution to this motion.

First Mr Speaker, I would like on behalf of my people of South New Georgia/Rendova/Tetepari, express our sincere condolences to the people of Guadalcanal and Malaita and those who have in one way or another, victims of the events of the recent past.

Mr Speaker, like all of us sitting in this Chamber, as parents, as fathers and mothers of this nation we do not want to get back to those old days. With that said, in my view this motion has been debated totally, entirely and deliberately out of context.

Mr Speaker, we have been very irresponsible in our debate on this motion. I am not part of the Cabinet Mr Speaker, but I have not come across a government policy or a policy intention to rearm the entire police force. No, Mr Speaker. It hurts me as a leader of this country to allow ourselves to be unscrupulously used to mislead our people in this country.

The issue of arms, Mr Speaker, has been in this country before RAMSI arrived. We have head hunting here. We have the head hunting era. We had the colonial era, the independence era then came the dark period of this country. It is only when arms were used as a weapon to destroy ourselves that it became a national issue.

As I have said arms have been in the country and are still in this country, and I for one do not believe in a gun free society.

Mr Speaker, I stand here to state that Solomon Islands will never be a gun free

society. There are still guns. If all of us want Solomon Islands to be a gun free society, let it be so. But I for one do not believe in that policy however good it may be.

Mr Speaker, I as a leader honestly do not want to see our nation go through the dark periods that we have experienced in this country. But on the other hand it hurts me badly for us as leaders to deliberately mislead our people in the way we debated this minor issue.

We have deliberately thrown it out of proportion. I called on the Special Coordinator of RAMSI to come out clear and openly to this nation. This is part of government policy as part of its institutional strengthening capacity, and what is RAMSI doing about it?

I wholeheartedly support the work of RAMSI but I am calling on all of us, every citizen of this country without fear or favor to openly discuss these matters however sensitive they are. We must come out very openly with our intentions?

If RAMSI does not want to strengthen the police force and does not want to arm our police force at this point in time then explain why and for how long is that going to be? That is what we want, Mr Speaker.

If you want us to be accountable, if you want us to be transparent then let us all be accountable. Let us all be transparent. That is the message I want to state on the floor of this Parliament.

Only when we use guns, Mr Speaker, and destroy each other then it became an issue. But there are still guns in this country and I believe and I think that is one of the main tasks of our good friends to go around looking for them and collect them.

Mr Speaker, when I came in to Parliament this morning there was a group of women outside the door of Parliament and when I came in they handed me a statement by the Civil Society.

Mr Speaker, I thank the Civil Society for the work it did, which consists of all Solomon Islanders. They said they affiliate with the faith based organizations, non government organizations, business organizations, committee based organizations, women, men and youth groups, villages and individuals are all represented by the Civil Society.

Mr Speaker, what I would like to pose here is what kind of message does the Civil Society go out and preach to our people, the innocent people that are living out in the rural areas of this country. Is it not propaganda? If we want to build up this nation, Mr Speaker, we must not use propaganda.

While all of us do not want this country to be rearmed so that we fight each other we must go out there with open hearts and open minds, clear hearts clear minds with good intentions. If we are to preach this gun free society in Solomon Islands, Mr Speaker, let us be open and frank about these issues and must not be influenced or driven by external forces.

Mr Speaker, I read the paper this morning and was a little bit saddened by this big statement in the paper. This person who wrote this big page what constituency does he represents in Solomon Islands.

While it is good to receive this kind of big statements from our friends, what is the intention of that and why does it have to coincide with today's motion. What are the intentions of that?

Mr Speaker, there are more serious concerns for this country than the rearming of our police force. There are serious concerns. Malaria is a number one killer. Why is Parliament not concern about this for debate in Parliament because it is the number one killer in this country. HIV/AIDS is coming. Why is Parliament not expressing this same deep concern on it? These are the issues I want the Civil Society to treat as importance and serious.

The reason why we are debating this motion is because we do not want to die. We do not want to die and that is why we are raising these issues here. The unfortunate thing that I see in today's debate is that we are spreading the message of fear and death and we have allowed this Parliament to spread that message in this country. How dare we use Parliament to spread the message of the fear of death in this country?

Mr Speaker, I have equal concern like the Leader of the Opposition and those who have spoken on this motion. But when discussing and debating these issues let us be honest. Let us be frank. I do not want to die too. I have young kids to feed. I have a constituency to feed, look after and I have very

good political and development aspirations for this country that I have yet to complete. I do not want to die tomorrow too and so I do not want the entire police force to be armed as though that is the intention as implied by this motion.

Mr Speaker, I think as responsible leaders we must be responsible as well in how we debate this very serious and sensitive matter on the floor of Parliament. I would therefore call on all of us leaders not to mislead and not to unnecessarily put fear in the minds of our people in this country.

With those remarks, Mr Speaker, because of the wording of the motion, which in my view is not really correct, I just find it difficult to really go in line with the points raised by the Leader of the Opposition and those who have debated this motion. Also there has not been a very balance debate on this floor on this issue of rearming a small unit in the police force.

That said, Mr Speaker, I resume my seat.

**Hon Sogavare:** Point of order Mr Speaker. With your consent I beg to move in accordance with Standing Order 81 Standing Order 10 be suspended to allow Parliament to continue and conclude the debate on this motion and to be adjourned by you.

**Mr Speaker:** Mr Speaker, may I get from Parliament that it will simply be continuing the debate on this particular item. My judgment on the very keen debate on motions today suggests to me that if we were to continue on the next motion, it might get us somewhere at midnight.

I would suggest that the extension of time suggested here is merely to conclude the present debate on this particular motion and this other one may have to be adjourned until next week. That is the understanding. I said that because I am also aware of Order 11(4). But I think the understanding is reached.

**Hon TOSIKA:** Thank you Mr Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this issue. This very important issue comes under my portfolio as Minister for Police and National Security.

Mr Speaker, the policy of government is very clear. The policy that comes under my

Ministry is to review and strengthen the police force, for which one of the activities is rearming of the CPU.

This particular activity which comes under my portfolio was debated and discussed in one of the Cabinet meetings.

Mr Speaker, I want to refer you to section 19(1) of the Constitution which interprets what the disciplined force is. Disciplined force means military or the Solomon Islands Police Force. On the other hand, Chapter 2 of the Constitution which talks about protection of fundamental rights and freedoms of individual is one of the considerations that we need to take onboard. Mr Speaker, on April 18 this very fundamental rights and freedoms has never been protected.

We have the ethnic tension and we asked RAMSI to come in and all arms in the armory had been destroyed by the Facilitation Act and the Solomon Islands Police Force was left with nothing even basic things like batons, shields and handcuffs.

Mr Speaker, if we can recall April 18, I was standing right in front of the Parliament, and it was very sad to see the Solomon Islands Police Force barricaded in front of Parliament with no arms, even no batons, shields or handcuffed. The very people we ask to restore law and order in Solomon Islands were standing behind with pistols, batons, shields and vestments. Is that the sovereignty we like, Mr Speaker?

Our good people of Solomon Islands especially those of you in Guadalcanal and Malaita were badly hurt during the ethnic tension. I am one of the victims too, the person now standing and talking. I was gun pointed in the Western Province during the "black shark" days.

My good wantoks the government is not stupid. The government has taken on board your thoughts, cries and aspirations. This unit that comes under the Prime Minister's Department, the CCU, the Close Protection Unit is to look after the Prime Minister, the Governor General and dignitaries that come from overseas. It is government's obligation. It is a constitutional obligation of the government to see these rights protected. People are protected when they visit us and also the Prime Minister as head of this

country and the Governor General too must be protected. It is constitutionally required and mandated by us to see these people protected.

We do not rearm to go to the Weather Coast to show you the guns or go to Malaita and show guns to the people of Malaita. No. The Guns will be with the people going around with the Prime Minister for the Prime Minister's own security and the Governor General and other dignitaries coming from overseas.

I hope you understand the stand the government has. Do not just listen to anyone because I am the Minister of Police who is telling you this. Think properly and listen well to what I am saying now. Otherwise many people will come and tell you different stories that are not straight, which in your own thinking will make you angry and say the government is not responsible. I must tell you that the government is responsible.

As I have already said, during the April 18 riot if you read section 19 it refers to sections 4 and 6 of the constitution, which says that disciplined force can exercise its powers when a court judgment is given. If we look properly at section 17 of the Constitution it says that if you fail to protect these rights then you must pay compensation to the people you contravened their rights. That is stated very clearly. The April 18 riot, who is going to pay compensation for the loss of properties and people who lost their dignities and rights? Who? Is it those of you on the other side? Who is going to pay? It was during your time. Who is going to pay for those losses?

It is constitutionally mandated. If you do not protect the rights of the people, the right to protect their properties you are going to pay compensation. But who is going to pay for the compensation? This happened when the Solomon Islands Police was not armed even with the normal riot baton. The people with the pistols, the people with the tear gas and people with arms were standing there just watching and allowed the looting and properties to be burnt.

We are not rearming the whole police force. We are rearming the CPP, as I have explained to the nation.

Those of us here in Parliament have to rethink and reassess our mentality.

On arming I will tell you. From day one when God created this world he was already armed. He was armed. Even God the Creator arms his angels. Even his appointed nation of Israel is armed to this date - the people whom God appointed them to live there.

We mere people living on this part of the world are saying that arms is not good. You talk about security as an important thing before any economic development. Why do you see arming as not part of the security of this nation? Why? Do you want to hide behind doors that have padlocks and chains round them? I do not think so. We are responsible people. Arming those people does not mean they will go around harassing people.

We talk about the Constitution, and as I briefly told you a discipline force means people who are trained, people who are control by the law to execute activities they implement day by day.

In the history of Solomon Islands during riots you will never see a single officer holding arms in a riot. You will only see them holding batons and shields. Even during very crucial times in Lawson Tama I was standing there and police officers were holding batons and shield but they contained the riots because they were trained in those types of activities. This is exactly why the Constitution spells out these people as the disciplined force that are trained to handle equipments and guns. The CPP officers will be armed with pistols, batons and will be armed with handcuffs.

These things will not be exposed to the public like we do now in Solomon Islands. People are roaming around the streets with guns. Which enemies are there to shoot? Where are the enemies to shoot? In the past arms were kept in the armory as stated by the MP for Savo/Russell, and he is right. At no time arms have been taken out from armory only the batons but those people are trained to handle arms.

Some of you talk about security. I want to tell you that the Solomon Islands Police Force is one of the recognized Police Forces in the region. They are well trained, very tactical and their strategy always works and that is why during the Bougainville crisis, and I praise them, because without their hard work, their

engagement and their sacrifice, they would not have protected our border. That is the hard work of those we look down upon in this House. They even sacrificed their lives and are traumatized by the intrusions and yet we do not recognize them.

The taking over of the armory in 2000 was the responsibility of this House. You did not make good decisions during that time to contain those activities that happened in Weather Coast. If you had done something that problem should not have escalated this far.

I praise the people who have taken up arms because this is why this Parliament is saved. If they had not taken arms to protect this House, this Parliament House would have been destroyed already because we have heard that our brothers from Guadalcanal surrounded the city. Those who are married to Guadalcanal women or men were also chased away. And so it was a very sad event.

Are we going to capitalize on this situation and continue to say arms is not part of our society? We have been living on with arms a long time ago. No matter during the heathen days we were already armed. People were armed with bows and arrows, people were armed with alafolos, and people were armed with spears. Do arms not exist? When we were born arms is already part of our society, it is part of any government and even in the world today you count me nobody in this world lives without arms. We all know that arm is part of our society.

With this, Mr Speaker, I want to urge every one of us to think very carefully that the government under its policy, as I have said is just to arm the CPP (Close Personal Protection Unit). It is not arms to carry around with them but arms put in vehicles that if anything happens they have access to it.

As you rightly said guns are still out there in the public. If a person walks in here with a SLR and starts to shoot, are you going to run away? Definitely you are going to run away because you do not have any arms to counterattack. Even those with arms run away with their vehicles when they threw stones at them. But that was just stones. What about bullets will you wait for it? I think there will nobody standing against it.

Our safety and the safety of our leaders are very important. These guns are not for the rural areas so that you should be worried about. It is something that is under control. The Commissioner of Police has a mandate under the Constitution to see that these arms are kept in safe places and can only be given to a police officer when required.

With these few remarks, I oppose the motion.

**Mr HILLY:** Mr Speaker, the arming of Police Force must come and must be done. The question is when. Is it now or later? The question before this honorable House is, is it time to arm our Police Force now or later. What makes us to think that it is now time to do that? And what too makes us think that it should be later? Where should we look to for guidance as to whether it is the right to do it now or is it a right thing to do it later?

Mr Speaker, last year I went to watch the police parade at Lawson Tama. Every time I like watching the police parade but at that time they were not holding guns. I said to the Commissioner of Police at that time that I admire the police parade when they hold guns and so when they parade without guns it does not look proper to me. The Commissioner said that guns are being ordered and they will come.

Mr Speaker, the greatest thing that has ever happened to this country is the arrival of RAMSI in this country. When RAMSI arrived everybody feels secure, schools were reopened, and people can walk around freely without fear. So it is a greatest thing that has happened to our country.

When RAMSI came in there were a lot of us who question their operations because we do not understand it. There is the security aspect, there are non security aspects they are involved in our departments to help us strengthen those units. Some of us even ask about the conditions of employment of the non security. No one has given us an answer to that question. Some of them were held against line posts in the government and actually run some of our departments.

Mr Speaker, I had the opportunity to be Chairman of a task force during the previous administration that looks into task force and

security. We also asked a lot of questions about what we do not understand, about what the public does not understand about the operations of RAMSI. We had expected that in the course of that Hilly, a provision given under the Facilitation Act will be able to clarify these areas and let our people in the country to understand it.

Unfortunately, some major reviews that had taken place before was never looked into and people still have a lot of questions about the operations of RAMSI they do not understand.

Mr Speaker, the hands, the power to let RAMSI is on the floor of Parliament. The law that regulates the operation of RAMSI was passed on the floor of Parliament. And this law I understand was legalizing of what was agreed on.

Sir, in my view, if there are shortcomings the government has seen in the operations of RAMSI why not revisit the Act. The Act is provided for review. Why do we try to organize another directive for security when we already have an arrangement on development of security for both police and other institutions within the Police Force?

Mr Speaker, my guess is that because when we are not happy we will start to have a lot of suspicions. Perhaps may be we are beginning not to trust RAMSI and therefore we want to get our people trained to handle guns.

My understanding is that gun is going to be introduced, gun has to be part of the police force but not until the process of rebuilding our police force is done properly so that they can be able to do it.

Mr Speaker, if the government of the day wants this to be done quickly visit the Act and go back to the people who come to help us and tell them our views that we want to quickly get part of the rebuilding of our police force. Everything is in our hands and the Facilitation Act facilitates the operations, and the power to even tell RAMSI our views is also on the floor of this Parliament.

Mr Speaker, I do not think it is necessary for the government to have another arrangement to rearm the police force. I think if the government wants to quickly rebuild the police force then it should revisit the Act and

talk to our partners that we want to train our Police.

Mr Speaker, this is my short contribution that we have an Act before this floor of Parliament that regulates the development of our police force and I think it is only right. But should we see shortcomings in the process, revisit the law and talk to our development partner so that we all go together on the same road so that one day hopefully we develop our Police Force and we see our friends go back to where they come from. But that is not until we are satisfied that they are trained properly in both handling of the weapons and the guns. They are trained properly to the work given to them before our friends can say to us that may be we are capable to look after our security and the people who spend their money to help us rebuild our security will be happy. They are happy because they have contributed to making our country a safer place for our people. They will be happy because the money coming in to be spent in rebuilding our security is stopped so that they use those things in their own country.

This is my short contribution, Mr Speaker. I do not think we have used the legal framework we passed in this House to re-look at the issue of rearming our Police. I urge the government that only in the rearming of Police but in any aspects of the development of police that if we are not happy with the process let us revisit the law we passed in this House to be regulated.

It is only in that context, Mr Speaker, that I support the motion.

**Hon SOGAVARE:** Mr Speaker, this issue is creating a lot of debate, and this is obvious because as leaders we have the duty to express our views on it.

Sir, my only disappointment is that the government's hand is a bit tight. I thought that matters relating to security are matters that should be treated as secret, and I feel it is totally inappropriate and not only inappropriate but it makes this House totally irresponsible to discuss them. They are matters that I feel that can be discussed in other ways.

As leaders, I feel that we have the responsibility to be sensitive about matters that

relate to, as I have said, the security of the country. In fact I was going to raise a point of order earlier on to register my concern to the House Committee and the Chair for seeing it fit to allow this motion to be debated in parliament.

The government is in an awkward position now because there are heaps of reasons why the government is taking this decision. But our hands are tight because of the fact that matters relating to security are treated as we should respect them as secret and they have other venues to discuss them.

Sir, I listen to views expressed by the MP for Ranogga/Simbo who has just sat down making a suggestion that the government should not make other arrangements outside of the Facilitation Act. This arrangement is done within the provisions of the Facilitation Act. We have thoroughly consulted the legal position before we venture into this particular policy. So it would be wrong to say that we should look at reviewing the Facilitation Act.

Of course, the review will come on other substantive matters but for this particular issue, it is actually allowed by Facilitation Act if the Government can actually arm its disciplined officers (discipline force). That is the exception to that.

In fact the arming of the Close Protection Unit is not something new. I need to correct some statements made in this Parliament. Access to arms by the Close Protection Unit is not something new. It started when the late MP for West Makira was the Prime Minister until the MP for Aoke/Langa Langa when he was Prime Minister. When I took over in 2000 the Protection Unit was still armed but we do not expose and carry arms around in vehicles and hold them and so on. They are kept secret or hidden away so that we do not cause unnecessary panic to our people when they see the arms every day. I would like to correct statements made here that they are not armed. That is wrong.

The Leader of Opposition moved this motion on two grounds. Firstly, he is alleging that rearming of the force or more precisely because we are only concern with the CPP Unit and so I will confine the government's policy on that unit, will pose greater danger to the public.

That is his first reason. Secondly, it is premature. Those are the two reasons he gave.

There is a very interesting coincidence because I was told the same reasons, very same, word for word reasons by the Special Coordinator of RAMSI. So I am hearing echoes of words and I guess networks. And if that is not enough, the National Council of Women, and the National Council of Women are making some serious statements that I find is insulting to police officers. They called them thugs. They were branded as irresponsible people. We still cannot come out of the situations of 2000. We just want to live the past. This country is moving forward.

I heard the National Council of Women saying the same thing. The executive of the SICA - I thought that it should spend more time spreading the gospel instead of involving in politics, and the so-called Transparency International, and certain NGOs and the Executives of Trade Unions that were also caught up in this thinking of posing greater danger and premature.

In fact Mr Speaker, it is very interesting because the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Australia, a very interesting coincidence published this issue right on the date we are going to debate this issue - a very interesting coincidence. He talked about arms too, and writes direct to the people of Solomon Islands.

I have expressed this morning that the channel for diplomatic communication from country to country is through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. You do not write direct to the people of Solomon Islands. Which constituency is he a member of so that he talks directly to the people of Solomon Islands?

As I expressed this morning it just confirms this thinking all along that we are running a parallel government in this country, and that government has the right to arm, the sovereign government of Solomon Islands, the elected government of Solomon Islands has no right to arm its Force. I find that very difficult to accept, and I guess understand the rationale.

All the Australian media are really inundated with news of civil unrest, mass strike by workers against the government's rearmament program. Mr Speaker, I thought those strikes should be strikes on the conditions

of work. If we are not paid properly then we should strike on such conditions. You do not strike on issues like this because this is politics, and you are involving in politics. The news in Australia, the television and newspapers are basically saying that Solomon Islands is going to be in trouble because the government wants to arm its small force and the whole country is shaking in their trousers. Everyone is saying there is going to be trouble because the government is arming a small unit that is only confined in Honiara.

Mr Speaker, I will just express concerns here because everything has been said already. The propaganda is very well designed and organized specifically. And as I said I am hearing the same thing from the Special Coordinator specially designed by RAMSI to continue to, I guess, stamp the authority of a parallel government here in Solomon Islands. I find them very interesting. At first they said that they are here only as long as the Solomon Islands want them or the people. The new tone of their singing now is that they will be here as long as it takes. That is a serious change in position which says a lot about this parallel government.

Lately they in fact went on a major complain targeting groups and organizations and even getting them to ask the people to make a very bias public statements to support, I guess, their desperate efforts to frustrate the government's plan. What annoys me on this is that they resort to really deliberate misinformation as their strategy. This is evil and one is fully justified to be concerned about our real agendas in Solomon Islands.

The Government's rearming exercise as was expressed by colleagues around in Parliament this morning and up until this afternoon is totally misrepresented. The plan was presented as if the government is lifting the gun free policy and rearming all Solomon Islanders. The way it sounds is as if boat loads of guns are ready outside there and everyone is lining up to get guns, and everyone in the villages are afraid because the government is going to rearm everyone in Solomon Islands. That is the kind of misinformation that was disseminated to our people in the villages.

I guess the psychological game played is to get Solomon Islanders to believe that the problem is very serious because registered organizations are opposing the plans. So it must sound right. What they are saying is right because they are registered organizations. They target and very cleverly done.

What surprises me is that as Solomon Islanders, and it saddens me to say this, we willingly allow ourselves to be brainwashed.

I want to pose a challenge here - if Peoples Power is what RAMSI is trying to capitalize on, then I am willing to take them on and ask those who have no problem with the government's policy to also may be march in the streets of Honiara because people want to go on strike against the government on this policy. So that we find out whether the executives of the National Council of Women, the Trade Unions, the SICA, the Opposition Group, Transparency International, certain NGOs have the followings that they claim to have.

Sir, as expressed and I fully respect the feelings that is around this House, even amongst my Ministers that RAMSI successfully convinced the Guadalcanal Coordinating Committee by way of, again, misinformation to campaign against government's rearming of the CPP. What they presented to the people of Guadalcanal, to me, is quite serious, very serious. Because these are the two island groups that experienced, I guess, the brunt of the use of illegal arms and so I can understand those feelings. As I said I guess it needs a bit of explanation. If the right information gets to our people, we should be able to dispel the fears.

Sir, their strategy is really to instill fear in the minds of ordinary Solomon Islanders that rearming of the CPP Unit, as I said already will only be in Honiara – is going to be very dangerous. That is evil.

I guess what I am saying here is that we are dealing with a very, very interesting network of people who have been indoctrinated to deliberately misinform the public and to instill fear in the lives of ordinary Solomon Islanders and were not given the opportunity to hear the government's side of the story.

We are not far away, we are only here. None of these people talking in the media come to us to discuss this issue with us. The National

Council of Women, all I heard is from the radio that we attack each other. We are here - this is the government of the people. You are welcomed, our doors are open for people who have concern about the government's policy and its strategies. Come and discuss those issues with the government. But they did not come. All we are hearing is complaints in the media.

The sad thing about it is that even well-to-do Solomon Islanders who should take responsibility to educate our people have allowed themselves to become part of this evil agenda. This amounts to interference in the domestic affairs of the sovereign state of SI. This is disgusting and may be seditious too.

Sir, the Opposition Leader's first reason, I just cannot accept it. It is laughable in light of what I mentioned already. How could rearming of a very small group of police officers possibly pose greater danger to the public? We are cleverly using words to attract the attention of people. This very small group armed and the public is in danger. This is evil – misrepresentation, misleading and this is how we leaders would like to start this term of, it is just 10 months and so we need to start pulling up our socks. The way we are going we might end up nowhere.

How could respectable leaders of this country go that low to allow themselves to be used at the pleasure of some people? You can defend this anyway you like but these are the agendas that everyone is talking about. I guess if we are cows we would have developed holes in our noses to allow ourselves to be pulled by them.

The second reason is even more confusing because the requirement to arm the personal bodyguard of the Prime Minister is expressively provided for under the law, and therefore never can be too early. This is expressed under the provisions of the law. The Facilitation Act also allows it through the Firearms and Ammunitions Act Cap 80. It also allows it, and so it can never be too early or premature.

Sir, be that as it may, I want to ask this question, what right does RAMSI have or anyone in here to determine the timing of this plan? You will find nothing in the Facilitation

Act that specifically authorized RAMSI to determine the timing of any rearming plan.

**Mr Gukuna:** Point of Order, Mr Speaker. I think the Prime Minister is dragging RAMSI into this issue. This issue belongs to the Opposition. I think he should be addressing us as what right have we got to determine the timing. You are alleging that RAMSI is involved. That is a serious allegation. If the Prime Minister could address the Opposition or you Speaker that we have no right to determine the timing.

**Mr Fono:** Stupid. We are leaders.

**Hon Sogavare:** I can confirm that. This is not a stupid Prime Minister. They brand him as madman, eccentric, but we are doing things within the laws of this country. I have never made statements in this Parliament that I cannot defend.

What you find instead, Mr Speaker is that it allows Police Officers to be armed if that is the wish of the government. It is very clear. So I find the MP for Rennell/Bellona standing up as irritating him a bit. It would look like he is working for RAMSI too.

Sir, by the same token I guess one is fully justified as well to question what right does this Parliament or anyone else for that matter to decide on the security requirement of the Prime Minister? We are doing something outside of our powers. Sir, in fact the way this motion is worded too is not straight.

I guess the other question, Mr Speaker, I would like to pose to all the so-called minders and campaigners for peace and security in this country is, where in the world do you find a country whose Police Force is not armed or better still allow foreigners to continue to hang on unnecessarily with the effective control of the country with the presence of their armed forces. I guess Iraq, Afganistan may be, East Timor and Solomon Islands.

Sir, we really need to appreciate some cooked facts about the breakdown of law and order in this country. It has nothing to do with the ordinary citizens. The sad truth about all the problems that we face in this country is the making of a very few so-called the elites for

their own narrow selfish interests, and we have been saying this every time in this House.

Even the so-called demands that brought the country to its knees, you ask an ordinary grassroots Solomon Islander and he knows nothing about those demands. This is a striking revelation. The problem of this country exists in the mind of a very few people and their insatiable desire to please themselves.

The sad thing about it all is that the majority of good leaders in this country is entangled up in the mess and become innocent victims too. To get the attention of the government these people use innocent youths to carry out their evil agendas.

I guess what I am trying to say here so we are playing tricks in our own minds and afraid of our own shadows. The concern over this government decision as well is over-exaggerated. I am hearing all kinds of rubbish. There are people who are saying that the Prime Minister has established a private army and has sent people to train in Taiwan. He has a private army. Do you have any better things to say, Mr Speaker?

In fact this misinformation was encouraged. In fact I have proof here by certain Members of the other side of the House were using it to try to justify their continuing attempt to pull down the government. Members of the government bench were approached with this misinformation. In fact a particular businessman through some people for some reasons known only to them believe that they will help members of the government bench financially was requested to withdraw that assistance so that they can easily take people across.

In fact the allegation this time, as I said earlier, is that the Prime Minister is trying to set up a private army for his own selfish reasons and is getting the government of Taiwan to assist in training members of that private army. This is not only laughable but stupid. It does not make any sense.

To demonstrate this continuing stupidity, Mr Speaker, I was amused.

**Mr Fono:** Point of Order Mr Speaker. The Prime Minister is very good at using the word “stupid” and “stupidity”. Is it right and proper

to use those words according to Standing Orders? Your ruling on this, Mr Speaker.

**Hon Sogavare:** Mr Speaker, I am not directing it to anyone.

**Mr Speaker:** He is making a general comment. He is not making it to anyone particular Member. I know what the honourable Leader of Opposition is getting at.

**Hon Sogavare:** Sir, I was saying that I was amused by comments by the Leader of the Opposition carried in the local media on the issue. I guess he followed the long queue of people who have allowed themselves to be deceived by popular arguments that were deliberately or were exaggerated by the advocators just to score political points. Unfortunately, the Leader of Opposition scored nothing in this side of the House because we are trying to make mountains out of nothing.

Solomon Islanders are not stupid too, to fall for cheap arguments like that. They are fed up with hearing people who cannot even reason out things. And with due respect to the Leader of Opposition I have yet to hear him say one good thing about the Government. It has all been criticisms on everything the Government is doing, even the good things we are doing in the budget are still being criticized. What I heard today is that if the government is doing good things we will support. There are many good things we want to do in the budget but even those things you do not support. So it is not right.

In fact, Mr Speaker I was really surprised at the lack of sensitivity coming out of the media to argue this matter. And I am also surprised that our people especially leaders can be that irresponsible to allow themselves to be dragged into the agenda of those people and become a party of their propagandas.

Sir, this is unforgivable and tantamount to a conspiracy to undermine the security of this country, and that cannot be allowed. Catchy headings and statements like “Opposition oppose return of guns” or “Solomon Islanders have had enough of living under the barrel of the gun” and when the Opposition Leader moved

the motion he mentioned guns almost a thousand times - guns, guns, guns.

Another catchy heading "Opposition Leader expresses strong opposition to rearm the Police Force" and then ask questions like, why should taxpayers money be spent on the security of a handful of politicians". Another question is, "what about the security of everyone else in the country?" The people do not want guns. These things are made without thinking.

I want to reiterate that we are not talking about rearming every Solomon Islander nor are we immediately concern about rearming the entire Police Force as alleged by this House, Mr Speaker. In fact, even the rearming of the CPP was nurtured through the former Commissioner of Police. He gave his suggestions and we were still discussing it when all of a sudden it was out in the media and people started to talk about it. This is a perfect example of what I described earlier about people who jumped at half truths and make issue out of them and when proven wrong we look very foolish.

Contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition and the others are alleging, Mr Speaker, we are only talking about a small unit attached with the Prime Minister. This is the Unit that is tasked with the protection of His Excellency and the Prime Minister all these years. It is one of the Units in the Solomon Islands in the Police Force that has always been armed and managed by Solomon Islanders until 2003 when they were disarmed under the Facilitation Act.

Talking about whether we have confidence on these officers, I lived with them in 2000. The Member for Savo/Russells also lived with them during his term. The Member for Aoke/Langa Langa also lived with this Unit. You talk about loyalty to the Government or to the authority we look nowhere but to this small unit. They were loyal to the government of the day.

Sir, since it is a known, not a secret thing, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia also mentioned in here that since the disarming of this Unit, the RAMSI contingent provide the back up but they withdrew on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2006 after I insist that the Unit must be localized and rearmed because I see no

reason for the continual engagement of RAMSI in this Unit Mr Speaker.

Sir, I traveled with them to the bush, go to places that we went to. I formed the opinion that they should no longer be with the Unit. In fact I took the action after I discovered that they have been actively involved in actually monitoring every people that they come to see me, and report the same to their headquarters. I find that very scary, not that I have anything to hide.

If these people are there to protect me but disclose who comes to meet with me, I feel very uncomfortable with all my securities. Somebody was actually cornered and he had to ring me up and said that they really questioned him why he had to come and meet the Prime Minister. They had come to see the Prime Minister of a sovereign state of Solomon Islands. What is your business to know who comes to meet the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands?

This is dishonesty and I cannot entrust my safety to them. After all they are foreigners. Like the former Commissioner of Police who stubbornly refused to implement this directive although he can do it under the Facilitation Act. Instead without any concern for the safety of the Prime Minister, the former Commissioner of Police and the Commander of the PPF overreacted and withdrew all logistics. This is an irresponsible action by the former Commissioner of Police and the Commander of the PPF.

In case they forget they need to be reminded that with the approval of Parliament in year 2003 RAMSI was entrusted with the security and safety of the people of this country including dignitaries. It is provided under the laws that we can look at rearming our own people. Their action is really irresponsible. They have by this very reaction failed to provide appropriate security services to the Prime Minister. If this is how they think they can treat the head of the government, then by their very presence they become security threats themselves, and we cannot continue to entertain this. In fact we would be simply irresponsible and naïve to do so.

I guess contrary to what the alarmists are concern about, we are not talking about a

new subject or for that matter arming a new unit of the Force. I guess this is where I find all the allegations leveled at the government by all those who have spoken against the decision to be chasing the wind and nothing but hot air.

Like I said, since the disarming of the local bodyguards in 2003 arms support for the Unit was provided by RAMSI officers. This is the arrangement I have already explained that I am not comfortable with for reasons I mentioned already.

The arming of this unit as I have already mentioned is a standing arrangement. And therefore all these nonsense about the Prime Minister only concern about his safety and not the safety of the public is made out of total ignorance of the standing arrangements. The question here is whether the Solomon Islands component of the CPP must also be armed and I do not see any reason why they should not.

In fact RAMSI's irresponsible withdrawal of all their vehicles and other logistics including daily arm support is all the more reason for the government to seriously consider this matter. The scenario that I have just discussed I guess changed the whole picture and arming of a local component becomes mandatory regardless, (we are sensitive to the calls) but this is a decision that has been made.

The question I want to ask now, is are you telling me that the Prime Minister of the sovereign state of Solomon Islands has no right to ask for security arrangement that he is comfortable with? Putting it another way, what right does Australia in this newspaper and RAMSI think they have to dictate the kind of security the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands must have.

Another misleading statement was advanced by, unfortunately the Special Coordinator himself who continues to say that the Government was going to immediately rearm the Solomon Islands Police Force and he desperately appealed to the public and called for support. In fact he successfully did that to some very important organizations, as I mentioned already.

I understand he also held meeting with the NGOs. Mr Speaker, the problem with these many organizations is that they think they represent the voice of the people when they are

not. What RAMSI and the executives of these organizations fail to understand is that they are not elected by the people of this country and therefore can never be representing the voice of the people. But they are not worried about that because as long as they achieve their unconstitutional agendas they will still go ahead. In fact, this move, Mr Speaker, amounts to attempts to sabotage government program.

Sir, I would like to stress here as well that the government has the constitutional responsibility to provide a safe and secure environment for its citizens. I guess the point that people of this country must understand is that RAMSI is a temporary arrangement as some colleagues have already mentioned and so we would be simply responsible to allow our internal security to continue to be in the hands of other people and we do not do it for ourselves.

In this connection, we will continue responsibly with this policy. It would be outright stupid for a country to buy the argument advanced by RAMSI that the SIPF is not ready to be rearmed. The question is, by whose standards? Sir, this gun free policy is taken overboard by Solomon Islanders. We are made to believe that our problem is to do with guns and without thinking Solomon Islanders shallow this trick. Sir, this is utter nonsense.

The problem of this country is not guns as RAMSI would have us believe but rather the reasons why guns were used illegally at the first place. In the case of the joint-operations, the armory at Rove fell into their hands without a single loss of life. We can go on and ask the same question about the armories at Taro, Yandina and Auki. We can also say the same thing about arms that were smuggled into the country. So the question that we need to ask ourselves is, why Solomon Islanders resort to the use of illegal weapons.

I am asking these questions several times because it is apparent that Solomon Islanders are really confused. We are framed into believing that Solomon Islanders are so animal-like that the moment they have access to guns they will just indiscriminately fire at anyone. This is nonsense and is pathetic as the people who allow themselves to be used by others advance this thing.

I am inclined to conclude that there is a concerted effort to suppress the issues that really matter so that there is always instability in this country to continue to justify our intervention.

I am making this observation because the problem of this country is development related, not guns as advanced by that group and its supporters both domestic and abroad. It is not guns but development. I want to drive this home by saying that if RAMSI is serious about returning peace in this country then they must be prepared to channel the good portion of this \$800 million that Canberra talks so much about to directly address the underlying issues of the ethnic tension which are development in nature. Not building more prison cells and sending more soldiers and policeman from abroad. No! In fact building more prison cells and investing in more soldiers and standby arrangement in case there is another riot is an admission of defeat.

What I am saying here and using their own analysis is that the problem of lawlessness is directly linked to lack of employment and other opportunities in the country. We all know why we did not direct a good portion of our assistance to address these issues so that we stop people going to prison. Building more prison cells is inviting more people to go to the prisons - a sign of defeat.

If they believe in what they are advancing then they must put their money where their mouth is, and that is rural development and the participation of people themselves in development. So far I am not impressed instead what we are continuing to hear from them is unfair criticisms about the leaders of this country if we do not play to their tune. So much for that.

Mr Speaker, we are also framed into believing that the worst groups of Solomon Islanders are the Police officers. If we cannot learn to trust our own people now we will never trust our own people in the future. Tough as it may be, it is a challenge that all Solomon Islanders must at some point in time sooner than later learn to face. In fact the insistence by the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) that the Solomon Islands Police Force is not yet ready to be rearmed is stemmed from the erroneous argument that the ethnic crisis was started by corrupt Police officers. All right

thinking Solomon Islanders would agree that this is utter nonsense.

In fact the cause of the ethnic tension is not secret. It is not secret and therefore it would not be correct for RAMSI to insist on that kind of scenario. Such a position only clearly demonstrates a blatant ignorance of those people and anyone else about the real causes of the ethnic crisis in Solomon Islands. This is manifested in the very legalistic strategy employed in addressing the problems of the country. This is wrong and the longer we allow them a free hand in the country we will only drive this country down the path, I guess, of another crisis. In fact if guns were our problem the warring parties would not have agreed to lay them down at the signing of the Ceasefire Agreement and later on the Townsville Peace Agreement in which the Member for Savo/Russells represented the government at that time.

There was also misinformation about Taiwan's rearming of the CPP as well. I want to correct them. This is perfect example of people who are trying to deliberately distort the truth to support their arguments. No, we are not. In fact we are not stupid so as to disregard the clear requirements under our laws in the country.

Training in Taiwan was intended to prepare these officers to implement the decision of localizing the Unit. I had made the government's position clear on this matter. I can go on and talk about these issues but I do not want to bore Parliament. I think I have said enough to illustrate my point.

Sir, this is a very responsible government and for people to say we are irresponsible or we are taking decisions in a rush and we do not want to consult with people or it is premature, these are allegations that were made without really knowing the facts behind how government wants to end this thing.

I want to make it clear to this House that I fully appreciate every single comment that this House has made, this side and that side of the House have raised. This is a very sensitive issue and as I said even my ministers are concern amongst especially my colleagues from Guadalcanal, and understandably so because of the sensitivity of this issue and therefore we should handle it properly.

In fact it was the intention of the government to handle this issue properly. We nurtured it through the Commissioner of Police. He gave us his views and we were still talking when the media blow it out from the media in saying that the government is now actively talking about rearming.

Whilst I fully appreciate the comments that were made in this House and the concerns that are raised, we would like to fully take up your concerns in the House. In that regard, I would like to outline how we are going to handle this issue. Because of comments raised here we will be holding serious talks with people who raised concerns already. This is the Opposition Group, the National Council of Women, Transparency International, the Solomon Islands Christian Association, the NGO groups, and the Trade Unions in the country. We will be organizing consultations with them to canvass the government's thinking through them so that we have a better understanding on how and why government wants to do this.

But as far as this motion is concern, Mr Speaker, as I have already said, the way I guess we structured this motion goes out of tradition. If the Opposition Group wants to receive favor from the government side to consider some serious issues of national interest, and this is in keeping with the separation of the judiciary, legislature and executive government. We need to keep within the spirit of independence. And as I said, that is why we have traditionally structured motions like that for the government to consider the thinking of leaders inside this House, and use the word "*government to consider*". That is how it should be.

Now the way this motion is structured Mr Speaker, is that it basically ordered the government to take on this motion. We will that that is not straight and it amounts to breaking the constitution. For this reason, as much as I fully appreciate and sympathize with the issues that are raised, I want to assure them that all I can do here is that I take full responsibility and we will take the concerns that are raised in this Parliament to the people that I mentioned and we will fully canvass this government policy with them. That much I can assure this House. But as far as this motion is concern because of the way it is structured, we will have to

respectfully oppose it and we will have to hold more discussions with the Opposition and the groups that I have mentioned.

With that, Mr Speaker, I resume my seat and I oppose the motion.

*(applause)*

**Mr BOYERS:** Mr Speaker, I will be brief. I know everyone wants to go home this evening. But I think it would be unfair for me not to contribute to this motion.

In respect to my experience and I know that there are lots of Members of Parliament who have been in this House for the last two terms and more that have scars of the past. There are a lot of issues that I feel are being overlooked in view of the process of rearming our police force.

As leaders in this country our people are watching us, and leaders have to lead by example. The example of rearming the police force would automatically draws fear for a personal protection unit. It draws fear in the lives of people in this country. It is a fact. It is something that cannot be denied. We all can feel it. I know it. Who of us in this house has been gun-pointed to? I have both here and in the Western Province.

Guns respect no one. I thought we were a society that would be able to mix with the masses whether it is a riot or not without any equipment. That is what I have seen in the past. There has always been respect. Guns don't do that. They demanded and demands are not part of the process, and I feel great respect.

As far as armament is concerned, it has been mentioned about angels. I think it needs to be clarified that angels are armed with the fruits of the spirit. I think we all need to, in this house understand how to arm ourselves with the breastplate of righteousness. Righteousness means right actions and right action is leaders for our people.

I agree that sooner or later we are going to have to take this into our own hands, but no one can deny the fear that is still in the communities. It is getting propelled out there and we are hearing it in this House.

Sir, I would like to share with you my experience. Instead of making accusations, I

want to talk to you about facts and realities. Two years ago, and I never mentioned this except in Caucus and Cabinet, when I was a Minister, my wife was hijacked at gun-point. She was told to drive to an unknown location and by an act of providence a hilux run into the back of the car and she managed to jump free. She was six months pregnant and she managed to escape. I do not take this lightly. And as a Minister of the Crown it was my obligation to make sure the general public never knew this. It is my obligation to make sure I protect my country.

Sir, I represent a constituency that is building this tourism industry and the last thing I want is for my constituency to suffer the lack of business entry because of some more travel warnings because we have more security risks.

It was in the newspapers, Mr Speaker, and in international headlines and we would again suffer. But this is another process that we are going through. We all have security problems and we are all experiencing them, but I do not have a personal protection unit either. If we are leading by example then let us play in a level playing field. Let us all move together at the same level whether we are in government or Opposition.

This is a country of 500,000 people that we are representing. We are trying to create hope, faith and confidence, and not create personal protection, insecurity and fear.

I think this motion presented by the Opposition Leader does not contravene. It only expresses the process of democracy. We have seen it. The women have spoken. The Civil Society has spoken. We all know I was in Opposition once when the government was in power and I did not agree with certain things either. But at the end of the day there is a voice out there saying to us, be careful. It is a warning.

I remember being asked by the United Nations to go to PNG to be an impact speaker at a PNG Gun Summit. When I went there I was totally shocked at the level of social unrest amongst the community which made the Solomon Islands look small in context. It was after the summit the report came to conclude that the guns within the society, a majority of them come from the Army and the Police Force.

The others had cross borders from the north and the south. Even though this personal protection might be a small position for our Prime Minister, and I agree the Prime Minister and any of our prominent leaders in our country should have the confidence of security. But I do not believe that we are going to instill faith, confidence and trust if we are going to be rearming the police. If they are police who are they for our Prime Minister or for anyone else. It is going to create a position for myself too. I want it too.

When my wife was taken to the station, Mr Speaker, she spent eight hours in the chair, blood running down her legs and arms. When she was finally let go the police officers said, *"This woman is just telling a story."* What kind of story? She had witnesses. Therefore, I do not have confidence in some of our police officers. I was very happy that I had a RAMSI officer eventually two days later came and took her for another interview that led to the arrest of two culprits. I think there is a lot more capacity building that needs to be looked into. I would agree with the position but not now.

I support the Member for Ranogga/Simbo on his statement on the timing but not now, the timing is wrong. I do not believe wisdom is being taken into account here. I think the process of self protection without thinking of the effects, the perceptions out in the public because people are still hurt. Reconciliation is still expected. Small things can have big impacts.

If we are truly Christians Mr Speaker, I think this Sunday we should all go and ask our respective pastors and ministers for scriptural guidance on the process of this step right now.

And it reminds me of one of God's policies. In the fourth paragraph of the Lord's Prayer it says: *"On earth as it is Heaven"*. I think we are living in an imperfect world dealing with imperfect situations, but at the end of the day Divine Guidance needs to be taken note of if we are going to be leading a Christian country. Guns do not bring down heaven Mr Speaker, but they only bring our soul up.

I think if we are talking about armament we should be talking about batons and tear gas for the protection unit. If we are talking about weapons it brings great fear.

I spent quite a long time when I was in the Opposition helping to recover guns in my constituency. I used my canoe and even helped to get surrendered guns from Rendova from the Member of Rendova/Tetepare's village. I spent five days carrying weapons back and forth. I did my part. We know there are a lot of guns still out there. But to live a double standard in saying it is all right for me to have a gun around me but not around you is sending the wrong message out to our people.

This is not a process of a vote of no confidence. This is a protest of protecting the future. I encourage the Prime Minister to have more confidence and impress him to hold hands with the whole House on the stand of humility and unity as a leader and father of this nation in supporting this motion to make sure we keep a safe and maintain a gun free country.

With those few words Mr Speaker, I support the motion.

**Hon TANEKO:** Mr Speaker, I will be very brief in my contribution to this motion. I am sad just like in the previous government as a Minister for Police and Justice.

Mr Speaker, I can see that this motion itself is premature. I had come across a lot of experiences when my prime minister of the day transferred me as the Minister of Health to become the Minister of Police and Justice during the height of the tension. I had a lot of testimonies – testimonies in a sense of facing situations between life and death in that portfolio.

Mr Speaker, all of us in here, the 50 Members of Parliament have been mandated to make right decisions in leading our country. This is the very hour that we as MPs must not repeat that problem any more in this country.

I am sad to hear RAMSI being mentioned in this House. Here we are, we did not even appreciate what RAMSI brought to this place. I joined other speakers to thank the Ministry, our Police Officers and the PPF. I would also like to thank the Minister for Police for mentioning the qualification and quality of leadership in the Police Force. That was before.

In the past the PPF was a well disciplined group when they manned the Bougainville crisis. There was no loss of life at

the border for more than two years being there in the border well disciplined force. Are they in the Force now? They had all left. More than 50 percent of them were no longer in the Force now. I am glad the new hybrids are coming.

This nation should be looking into how we are going to bring this nation to build the bridge that has been broken down between us through the Ministry of Reconciliation. That is the first step we should take before rearming the Force. Rearmament is a sad thing. I have been traumatized by guns. My family has been harassed at night at gun point. Those are experiences that I had. One night militants came to my house and pointed a gun at my neck. I was listening to you people and I was sad to hear you talking about guns. Do you want guns to come back? Yes, of course, we want it but this is not the right time for it.

Let us make these new hybrids in the Police Force to become well disciplined officers, and when they become well disciplined officers and abide to their code of ethics then that could be the right time to arm them. It could be in five or ten year's time. We are not denying them here. We would like to have our sovereign nation to be armed. Yes, of course, but this is not the right time.

Another experience I had is when I was ordered by my prime Minister to go down to Noro to look into the shooting that happened there. A vehicle was sent to pick me up and when I got into the vehicle there were guns in the vehicle. I was picked up just to discuss the matter but guns were in the vehicle. Mr Speaker, that night was a terrible night for me. All of you are here not knowing anything but I almost lost my life. You may have heard I was taken to the hospital and had there been no RAMSI I would have died already. Why, because of all the threats and pressures in the Ministry? Every morning at 8.00 am in the morning more than 200 Police Officers came demanding their claims. The louvers of the Ministry were all broken because stones were thrown at them and I had to hide under the table.

Sir, let us review the Facilitation Act. Bring it here if you want to change the Act. As I stand here I would like to see our Police Officers rearmed but may be it is too early because we have many new hybrids in the Force. It is good

news that Police Officers are now selected from Form 5 dropouts. That gives more opportunity for them to become good disciplined officers because of their academic level of understanding. It is no longer Form 3 now and so we have to train and bring them to that level before the right time will come for them to be armed.

Again we are seeing complaints from people in the civil society, people in the villages posing the concern otherwise we go back to square one.

Mr Speaker, as a leader every one of us in here have to talk to our people. Leadership is leading, it is not following, and this is confirmed in the Bible. The Bible also says that a man who holds a gun will also die by that gun. It is scriptural. It is a sad thing but that is from the Scripture.

Sir, why do we need guns? Who are our enemies in here? Who are our enemies? There were no security guards guiding me until the war ends. Even though I was harassed I stood firm because I did not want to make enemies with my fellow members in here because we are just one people. The nation Solomon Islands is beautiful. There is something happening on tourism.

The number of tourists going to the Western Province has reduced. Why? There are less tourists going to the Western Province now because when they heard that our Police Force is going to be rearmed no tourists are going there now. Tourism is the highest commodity than forest and gold. If our beautiful country is free of guns we could import human beings from countries like the USA, Australia and New Zealand.

Mr Speaker, you all know what happened to the Ministry of Finance. No one in here will say 'I do not know'. Our money is almost finished – the basket is empty, all of us are empty and then the savior came in, the regional group came in and helped us. But we cannot even appreciate them for what they have done. We owe them. At least we should say a small 'thank you' to them because we are alive. Because of that we are able to rebuild our economy. So let us make those disciplined forces to become much stronger disciplined forces.

I thank the government for sending police officers to go and train to become good disciplined officers. There should be more academic police officers, more graduates from university level to enter the Police Force. Maybe there is good training now in the Ministry of Police, and I am sure the government side is happy, and maybe this motion will come true.

Mr Speaker, I have many testimonies about the tension period when guns were around. One morning they came and broke all the louvers of my ministry and carried everything outside. This is reality. I even lost my right thumb because I was kicked and so my thumb was broken. This is reality. This is a beautiful country and so let us rebuild in peace.

Sir, I want to appeal to the Minister for Peace & Reconciliation to make a national reconciliation and peace so that we can be united before we can reconsider rearming when the right time comes, maybe in five or ten years time.

Mr Speaker, as I said I have many testimonies on this issue of guns and so I support the motion.

**Mr Fono:** Mr Speaker, thank you for allowing me to wind up the debate on this motion.

Mr Speaker, the motion as it reads is not taken out of context. Rearming the Police Force including the PM's VIP officers or the Close Protection Unit referred to and then the second part is the 'timing'. Mr Speaker, this is straightforward motion and it has very noble intentions.

I think the Prime Minister has explained that he will have discussion with stakeholders on this policy of rearmament. That discussion should have taken place initially before making it publicly. Such public policies must gain the support of stakeholders. It is a public policy that will affect the lives of everybody in this nation, not only the Prime Minister and Ministers, but the whole nation. So there must be wider consultation on such a public policy before the government makes known its policy of rearmament.

Mr Speaker, it is not taken out of context. It is just straightforward, and I hope MPs as national leaders could vote according to their conscience whether we like to rearm the

Police Close Protection Unit now or delay it until the review of the Facilitation Act or RAMSI within the country is done on a wider perspective. That review is coming up as endorsed by the Forum in its meeting last year. We thought that any rearming now is premature.

Mr Speaker, again the question of reconciliation comes in. It is very good that the government caters for reconciliation in this year's budget on what is known as Truth and Reconciliation, so that we trash out issues that contribute towards the ethnic tension before we could rearm the Close Protection Unit.

Mr Speaker, the main reason why the government wants to introduce rearming is because of our sovereignty. I do not dispute that Solomon Islands is a sovereign nation, not at all, and it is the prerogative right of the government to make a sovereign decision.

But the question we pose was, where is sovereignty during the ethnic tension when guns were in the hands of our boys, Solomon Islanders? Where was sovereignty, may I ask? The same concern on sovereignty was no longer there. Is it only this time that we want to gain back sovereignty?

Some of us would like to see a total overhaul or review on RAMSI so that whatever changes done are in line with the Facilitation Act. I am surprised at the statements made by the Prime Minister as though he is debating a vote of no confidence, and he is anti RAMSI and anti Australia too.

Mr Speaker, I made it very clear that at no time did this side of the House consult Australia, let alone the Foreign Minister who issued that statement. It may be coincidence but they have something to tell this nation that without the intervention by RAMSI funded by Australia, this nation should not be where it is now. We all understand this.

Are we short-sighted? Are we short of memories, Mr Speaker? Where are our memories? I think we are so arrogant that we forget it. That is our concern and that is the concern of the public. The Civil Society Groups and Churches have the right to tell the government their concerns whether you like it or not. They are part of Solomon Islands people, and the media has a role to tell the nation the concerns of the Civil Society Groups.

I brush aside the comments made by the Honorable Prime Minister that the Opposition colluded with Australia or foreign forces or the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Australia, as an evil scheme.

Mr Speaker, we are national leaders and we are respected. Some of us are chiefs in our own tribes

*(hear, hear)*

and we are representing our people and that is why we are raising this concern.

Mr Speaker, I think it is time the government considers again this policy. That is why I said earlier on that public policies should get wide consultations before released as a program or government action on such public policy. Or are we putting the cart before the horse?

Mr Speaker, this motion is not a no confidence motion in the Solomon Islands Police Force as some Ministers have alluded to. Not at all, Mr Speaker. We have confidence in the Police Force. In fact they are doing a very good job in enforcing law and order. What we are saying is that it is not time yet given the experiences of the ethnic tension to rearm them.

What we need to do is to make them undergo training and provide batons to them. Batons are not arms, as my good friend the Minister of Health said. Batons or tear gases and all that should be part and parcel of their capacity building. Arms is different and this motion is directly related to arms, rearmament. That is basically where we are coming from.

This motion is not a no confidence in the police force. Not at all. We have very high regard for our police including the RAMSI police who continue to work together in enforcing law and order. Without that this nation would have already collapsed. We know very well. Where are our memories now? Are we short-sighted or are we lack of memories now?

I think those who have spoken out have commonsense. They have commonsense because they know exactly the negative implications of this public policy of rearmament because of the experiences they have had during the ethnic tension. That is all they are saying,

and as a government, responsible government, of course, listen to the voices of our people. Listen to their voices and take into account their concerns in formulating your public policy.

Mr Speaker, as I have said, some of the comments and statements made by the Prime Minister is anti RAMSI and anti-Australia. We are not discussing RAMSI policy or we are not discussing a vote of no confidence here. If the Government wants to do away with RAMSI bring in an amendment to the Facilitation Act or bring in that act so that we can change it or do away with it so that we get rid of RAMSI.

But may I warn this honorable House, Mr Speaker, the signal that is going out to development partners and foreign investors is that this nation will suffer. You mark my words, Mr Speaker. I have some development partners visiting me expressing their concerns on government policies.

As a national leader that is good. We need to know what their concerns are. This policy on rearmament is giving out the wrong signal to our development partners including foreign investors, let alone if we want to get rid of RAMSI.

Negative implications, Mr Speaker, in terms of security and in terms of foreign investor confidence and donor confidence, this nation will be at its lowest peak. You mark my words, Mr Speaker. It is giving out the wrong signal.

Some of the donors were saying that Ministers are not prepared to meet them. Why? Are you working or are we so proud that we do not want donors now?

Mr Speaker, as national leaders we should be open doors to discuss with our development partners. If this policy is going to be implemented by the government it is now creating fear in the minds of foreign investors.

Finally, Mr Speaker, the Prime Minister dedicated this nation to our Almighty God on the first day of taking office. What again has required him to be armed, for police officers to arm him? Is he afraid of anything?

If we dedicate this nation to our Almighty God we should have confidence that God is our Protector. God should protect us. What are we frightened of to be armed and have the police to be armed? Can I ask all leaders to read Isaiah 54 verse 17: *No weapons formed*

*against me shall prosper says the Lord*". Why are you afraid of arms? We dedicated this nation to our God and He is protecting us. Or we say one thing and do another thing, may I ask Mr Speaker? No weapons formed against me shall prosper. That is the quotation. We claimed to be Christians so what are we afraid of? Or do we have something to hide so that they must be armed when they go around with us?

Mr Speaker, we have dedicated this nation to our God and it is our belief and hope that God the Almighty will provide a refuge. This is strength to us national leaders, so let us be courageous.

The timing of this rearmament, Mr Speaker, as the intention of this motion is not right yet for us to enter into that policy. Therefore, with these few remarks Mr Speaker, I believe that Members of this House would vote according to their conscience, knowing very well that whatever decisions they make their constituents will hear it and know whether their Member supports rearmament or not. I hope that we vote according to our conscience, Mr Speaker, so that our nation knows which side we vote.

With these few remarks, Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

*(applause)*

*The motion was put to voice vote and defeated*

**Mr Fono:** Mr Speaker, can I call for division according to section 42 of the standing orders?

Division called for:

Results

Ayes:	19
Noes:	27
Absent:	1
Absent:	<u>3</u>
Total Votes	<u>50</u>

*The motion was defeated*

**MOTIONS**

**Mr Speaker:** Parliament is adjourned under order 10(5) until Monday the 12<sup>th</sup> next week.

*The House adjourned at 6:45 p.m.*