S.I.O North Eastern Area

Submitted the attached report on Coastwatching activities at Bougainville dated 26th April 1943 by Lieut. W. R. Read RANVR.

[Signature]
Lieut Commander RANVR
D.S.I.O.

D. N. I.
Melbourne

Submitted for information.

Melbourne. 18th May 1943.

[Signature]
S.I.O.

[Note: The handwritten note at the bottom of the page is not legible.]
1. Sub-Lt. Keenan, with 2 AIF personnel, will cover Buka Passage area. He will have a 3B Teleradio based somewhere near Lumsis Village; and a 208 Field W.T. Set will report back to him from the observation post formerly occupied by BTU, and which commands an uninterrupted view from Soraken on the west to Banu on the east. It takes in the whole of Buka Passage, Buka Island and the airfield thereon, and all that area north of an imaginary line Soraken to Banu. This lookout position is 2,400 ft. a.s.l. It is seldom clouded in. Any activity on the airfield can always be seen or heard. All shipping entering or leaving Buka Passage can be observed; and any shipping passing 50 miles or more to the east or west can also be seen. It covers all the nearer enemy outposts of Porton, Chabai, Tarlens and Chundawan.

The position of the 3B Teleradio itself commands a full view of the East Coast extending from a point just north of Banu as far south as Teop Harbour. Its height is 1,500 feet a.s.l., affording an horizon as far as the Cartareta Islands; and its nearness to that section of the East Coast abovementioned enables a close contact with the beach road for quick information of any enemy movements thereon.

2. Lt. Read together with Capt. Robinson and Lt. Bedkober will be based at Aita. As yet I am not in possession of any first-hand facts re Aita; but I understand that its altitude is about 3,000 feet a.s.l., and that it commands an uninterrupted view of the East Coast from Inus Fltn as far south as Kita. Thus it overlooks the enemy occupied area extending from Numa Numa Fltn south to Marbiri Fltn. I propose to move to Aita immediately following the arrival of the balance of the new AIF Section.

A 3B Teleradio will be established at Aita; and it will have communication with 208 Field W.T. Sets at the following points:

(a) Namatea: A forward outpost of 4 AIF personnel will be posted here in order to cover whatever enemy activity may eventuate from Inuts recently alienated. From this position the view to the east extends from the entrance to Buka Passage as far south as Inus Fltn; and its elevation of 2,000 ft. a.s.l. gives a distant horizon covering any shipping.

(b) Darai: Although this post has no real strategic value from the point of view of coast-watching, it will continue to be manned for a time by 4 AIF personnel. It came into existence only recently as our first bastion, or the position in which we could fall back if forced, and where stores could be dropped. Aita will supplant it as our Headquarters; and when Aita is established to satisfaction the personnel will probably be withdrawn from Darai in order to establish still another base and drop site for use in an emergency, and secondary to Aita. Darai is on the route from Aita to our forward post at Namatea abovementioned.

(c) West Coast: At the moment we have no coast-watching contact with the West Coast. I understand that within easy reach of Aita there is a point which commands a very wide view of that coast taking in Purrata (This place was under enemy occupation at one time, but was later reported to have been abandoned) and the Kunua Coast. The West Coast lacks harbours and is, by comparison with the East Coast, practically deserted; none the less it is desirable that a coast-watch post be established in order to cope with whatever enemy movement may take place there. This will be done by 2 AIF personnel with a 208 Field W.T. Set.
(d) Numa Numai- A 208 Field W.T. Set will be utilised by a team of 2 AIF personnel to take up a post affording a closer view of enemy activities around Numa Numai, Tena ‘kau, etc.

Thus, so far as the Aita Base is concerned the proposed plan will leave 4 AIF personnel on hand there for any job arising.

3. Sub-Lt. Mason and Lt. Stevenson accompanied by 8 AIF personnel will cover the Kieta-Buin area. That party will leave Aita equipped with two 3B Teleradis and three 208 Field W.T. Sets and move south through the centre of the island. Beyond that it is not possible at the moment to lay down anything specific as to their plan of action — due to the fact that for the past four months, ever since Mason was forced to get out of the area, we have had no reliable access as to just what conditions now prevail there. The subsequent disposition of the party personnel is dependent on what progress is achieved as it penetrates towards the two objectives of Kieta and Buin. However, it is very probable that Stevenson will base a 3B Teleradie somewhere as indicated on the sketch map, using the 208 Field W.T. Set to cover at closer range whatever enemy activity is current around Kieta, Habbirri, Arigus, etc.; and that Mason will be able to get back again to the Buin area, basing his 3B Teleradie and using two 208 Field W.T. Sets to the best advantage. Such is the plan in general for this party — future developments depend entirely on its progress.

Subject to any instructions to the contrary, as soon as the evacuation of the old AIF Section has been accomplished, and the incoming personnel are to hand, the plan as outlined above will be put into effect. By the end of May it should be in full working order; and it will mean that the whole of Bougainville will then be covered to the maximum advantage. We will then be in a position to give maximum compliance to any order from Headquarters as to any specific information required.

It will be noted that the proposed plan utilises all of the 31 units which will comprise our strength after the relief of the old AIF Section has been completed, and additional new personnel are to hand.

The accompanying sketch map of Bougainville and Buka is intended merely as a diagram to illustrate the plan outlined above; and does not embody any scale or geographical accuracy. It is, however, correct as regards the shaded coastal areas designating enemy-occupied or frequently patrolled localities. In my opinion, with the personnel and equipment at our disposal, the plan as proposed is sufficiently comprehensive from the point of view of intelligence to cover these areas. It is an elaboration of the skeleton plan approved recently by Lt. Com. Mackenzie.

(Copies forwarded to:-

Lt. Com. H. Mackenzie, RAN.
S.I.O. BRISBANE.

Lt. Com. Pryce-Jones, RAN.
D.S.I.O. KUNGA.)

(W. J. Read )
Lient., R.A.N.V.R.
26/4/43.)
To: S.I.O. Brisbane; and
D.S.I.O. Junnga.

The following are a few random notes which may
be of use or interest concerning Beuaginnville:-

Personnel:— Our total strength will be 31 units, that is when the
evacuation of the old AIF Section is completed, and the new
incoming personnel are all to hand. Recently 10 additional
units were asked for — preferably signalmen. Present strength
is barely sufficient to cope with the organisation now in the
making. We need these 10 extra units to permit of a small
working surplus, and to deal with any emergency arising. We
now know by experience that the stores drop on the present
basis will feed another ten men.

Stores:— We are very appreciative of the organisation which has
enabled regular drops these past months; and, often under un-
favourable conditions, the pilots have made our ground work
easy by their skilful and accurate placing of the parachutes.
Occasionally chutes have failed to open; but our less in that
respect has been only slight.

At present we have two approved drop sites available to
us, viz, Aita and Dariai. While present circumstances hold it
is intended to prepare still more drop sites for use should
same ever be necessary. Thus, by maximum conservation of stores
we should eventually have emergency feed dumps dispersed with-
out the difficulty of ground transport.

There will never be any difficulty for us to forward
stores, as required, to Keenan and party covering the northern
end of the island, from the drops at Aita, Dariai, or such other
central site as may be used. But the Maseo-Stevenson party
occupying 10 units all told cannot be so served — it would
not be practical to carry stores for so large a party over the
arduous and sparsely populated mountain routes intervening. The
alternative is for that party to arrange its own drop site for
direct supply as required. If not practical to give them a
monthly drop, then one every two months should suffice.

The selection of stores comprising each drop is most
satisfactory. Fleur is about the only item which usually runs
out before the end of the period. Our enforced move to the
interior has meant the curtailment of our fresh meat supply
brought provided by plantation cattle on the coast. That
means we will need more tinned stuff than in the past. I have
heard mention of Dehydrated Meats — such as, that 1 lb of dehy-
drated mutton is equal to 7 lbs of fresh mutton, etc. What are
the possibilities of more dehydrated feeds being included in
each drop, please — and, presumably, there would be a considerable
saving of space in the plane?

Quinine Tablets — we need 1,000 five-grain tablets each
month please. In the past the drop has included only a couple
of hundred or so — not enough for the existing personnel. The
original supplies of quinine which we were able to retrieve
from Buka Passage and Kieta prior to enemy occupation have en-
abled us to carry on to date; but these supplies are now just
about exhausted.

Regarding Teleradie requirements: Each drop should in-
clude 2 galls S.A.E. 20 Engine Oil, and two 5-galls drums of
Bensine.

An ample supply of stationary will also be needed each
drop from new en — required for use by the increased number
of signalers we will now be operating the mobile 208 Field
W.T. Sets.

Our ability to pay our way for all native services is
our greatest asset in retaining their allegiance. This is bes-
done with Stick Trade Tobacco, Newspaper, and Calico. It is ver
necessary, please, that four 30 lbs caddies of Tobacco be the
standing order for each drop; together with a quantity of old
newspapers. The question of calico for trade as loin-cloths
has been overcome by cutting up the parachutes after each
drop. An attempt was made to cache these with a view to their
possible future use; but it was found that they rapidly deter-
iorated under humid conditions, and also became rat-eaten. We
are now cutting up all parachutes for trade purposes.
As I compile these notes word comes through the crash of the Catalina somewhere near site. The only information I have at this moment is that of the crew of 9, three are dead, and six have been badly injured. The injured personnel are now being conveyed to the coast in anticipation of immediate evacuation. You may be in receipt of advice from the second plane as to what caused the accident. Is it possible at all to consider being future drops by day?

Evacuation - The only civilians now left enemy-free on Beugainville are 12 Europeans - all men; and Asiatics 6 men and a child. The dozen Europeans were to have gone out this trip, but in all probability the number will have to be cut in order to make room for the injured airmen. My reason for persistence in the past to get all civilians out is backed by the certainty that their chances of survival would be nil were they to fall into enemy hands. Now that all the women and children have been cleared the position is much better.

The site of the last two trips, Teop Harbour, is no longer safe due to the recent occupation of Tinpia. Hence the desire to switch a few miles further down the coast for this coming trip. The landing facilities there are just as good as Teop; and it also has the added advantage of being the road-head for a quick get-away to the interior for incoming cargo and personnel. While Teopasino continues to be free we would prefer to use it for any future trips. A rough sketch plan of the harbour is enclosed for possible use in the future - I understand that Teopasino Harbour is not charted.

Also, in connection with any future trip, we now have a Lucas Signalling Lamp ready for use instead of conspicuous fires. The enemy is aware of the first trip on 31/12/42 at least; and they probably know of the last one as well. They know the locality that was used. Any of their planes operating by night only do so very spasmodically hereabouts; but there is always a risk that a fire for any future trip may attract attention to the area.

The experience of the last trip, when Lt. Com. Foley brought the vessel right into the harbour only a few minutes after the signal fire had been lit, has shown that if future trips can be arranged for a precise time and hour the job can be got away with in half an hour - no matter how close the enemy may be.

The Teop-Teopasino area has the facilities which no other open locality has - easy to guard for some miles each side by means of teleradios conveniently posted; an adequate native population which is loyal to us, and which is necessary to provide carriers, etc.; and affords a quick get-away to the interior. It is with a view to future trips that Namatoa will be manned over-looking this area. The difficulty of having to move elsewhere for such operations would increase a hundred-fold.

Native Situation: Briefly, the northern end of the island is not too bad; the central area is not so good; and, although I have had no firsthand experience of the southern end, Mason informs me that it is intensely pro-Jap - due mainly to the influence of the natives of Kieta and vicinity. So far as the northern end is concerned it seems that the novelty of the new regime is wearing off - and it may even be that the natives are awakening to the fact that Jap methods of ruling are not all that they appeared to be at first. Forced labour, commandeering of produce without payment, violation of their women, petty thieving by Jap patrols, etc., etc., is making itself felt in our favour.

Natives in the immediate vicinity of Kieta flocked to the Japs and were soon installed as guides to patrols. Under armed protection they looted amongst anti-Jap communities, carried off the women, and generally instituted a reign of terror. Their success began to influence adjacent areas in the belief that crime paid. In a short time they were eagerly betraying European and Asiatic refugees hide-outs to the Japs. Several Chinese were roped in by their aid. Mr. Tom Ebery, formerly of Tolmanapu Ptn, fell a victim. He was actually captured by natives and taken to the Japs. The patrol to whom he was handed was then on the track of Mason and party. Ebery was forced to accompany that patrol, though he was in no fit state to cover the arduous country ahead. When he lagged he was continually struck by Jap rifles and beaten by the accompanying natives. Whilst crossing a river Ebery is stated to have sat down thoroughly exhausted; and he is alleged to have said to nearby natives that he could stand no more. He then slipped
The native attempted to save him, but were prevented from so doing by the Japs. I prefer the opinion that Ebery was goaded to suicide by torture.

There is the more recent case of Roche. Native betrayers led the Japs to his place in the Kieta hinterland. He was brutally handled by the natives before the Japs took charge of him. They forced him to walk for a whole day, having first tied his head forward and down between his ears. When Roche was at the stage of exhaustion they beheaded him. Fr. Muller is said to have located the body the next day and performed the burial rites.

The same natives first introduced the Japs to the Numa Numa area where a number of Chinese were in hiding. One, Mack Lee, was caught and murdered after being subjected to such torture as having fire-sticks poked in his eyes and mouth.

There are other numerous incidents which could be quoted concerning the misuse of Chinese women by both Japs and natives—how ever, they are but victims to the Jap method of instigating them to acts of self-infirmation as the best means of divorcing them from the European. By their many acts the Kieta natives now find themselves so much involved that they cannot pull out, as it were. Large numbers of them now accompany the Japs up and down the coast—there are forty of them with the Jap force now at Tinputz. But I do not think they will be so keen to guide the Japs to our vicinity—in view of the stand courageously taken by the Police Boy Samai. A patrol of six Japs sighted him and fired on him. He retaliated and put them to flight, wounding three of them. One died soon afterwards, and the other two were taken away by schooner.

Our contra-propaganda, to the effect that drastic action will be taken against any natives collaborating with the Japs against us, has having good results hereabouts. The same attitude will be adopted by the Mason-Stevenson party when moving to the other end; and I have no doubt that results will be commensurate. In our circumstances, the Japs by themselves are no real menace to us; but with the help of natives they become a serious danger.

Enlistment:—I refer to two Methodist Mission Teachers here who have rendered us excellent service for a long time past. They are Usai Sotutu, a Fijian; and Karim Kotosuma, a Tongan. The former has been on the job since April last year; the latter since about November last. I have mentioned the matter in earlier signals; and hope that something can be done to put them both on the pay-roll. Both have been here for up to 30 years; have an extensive knowledge of the island; and each has a widespread following of Methodist Teachers throughout the island. In all probability Usai Sotutu will accompany the Mason-Stevenson party as guide, etc. Incidentally, when the enemy occupied Buka Passage on 30/3/42, he was directly responsible for secreting, feeding, and eventually guiding to safety the party of AIF who had been cut off on Buka Island. Practically the whole of the peace-time native police force is with us. In accordance with early instructions they were duly attested; and I presume their position is a right officially.

In addition, we also have many natives with us who were indentured to the Administration in peace-time. Two of these lads are very good W.T. operators; and will prove very valuable with these small 208 Field W.T. Sets we now have. They are Tomaia and Tamti. I would like to see whatever is needed to be done to place them on an official footing please.

The employment of 50 permanent carriers @ 6/- per month has already been approved. These comprise mostly natives of other parts of the Territory—all to our advantage.

Jap. Situation:—There is little of any value that can be stated in furtherance to our signals. I would say that there is anything from two to three thousand troops, ground staff, etc., at Buka Passage—which includes the outposts of Karcola, Tarlena, Chuabai, Porton, Chundawan; and also the hundred or so at Tinputz. We know that there has not been a ship of any size at the Passage for at least two months past. We know also that they are having difficulty in getting enough native foods. A system is in vogue whereby certain villages provide food on certain days; but due to the strain on their own supplies, and also because of the payment, if any, is poor, the natives are tending to dodge the issue. Every indication is that the Japs are hard pressed for food.

Native rumour has it that the forces who recently occupied the Numa-Tenakau-Arigua-Marbiri area are ex Guadalcanal; that they are very short of food; and very poorly armed and clothed.
The names of Tashiro and Tosh are freely mentioned here as being with the Japs. Both are old Bougainville identities. We know definitely that Tashiro is here as the D.O.Kieta; but I doubt very much if Tosh is - he would be over military age now. Tashiro was very popular here in peace time amongst natives; and that factor has gone a long way in influencing the Kieta natives to Pro-Japism.

Unfortunately I am not able to include much concerning the Kieta-Bulin area - we've been cut off from that part ever since Mason was forced to get out some four months ago. I am certain that in the near future we can furnish some information about that area when Mason and Stevenson get on the job.

Regarding Buka Passage airfield it is reliably reported that the 98 planes which raided the Solomons about three weeks ago all took off from there. Intelligent natives counted them as they took off, and they made the number 98 - which was the figure subsequently stated over the air. I believe it to be correct - in which case the ground activity at Buka is more than I thought.

In some ways the Japs have rather overdone their propaganda efforts. For instance, on at least two occasions in the past couple of months all village chiefs have been assembled at Buka to receive an address from the O.C. The talk has taken the line that for the moment the Japs are being a bit hard-pressed; that American attacks were to be expected on Buka Passage; that the natives should prepare dugouts for themselves as protection against bombings; that it may even be that the Japs would be forced to retire from Buka Passage to the hills to wait until they were ready for a counter-attack; that in such case the natives were to succour them; that all coastal villages were to inaugurate a system of coast watching in order to warn the Japs of any American ships approaching, etc., etc. Such propaganda based on sympathy re-acted rather to the contrary - to the native mind they were being told by the Japs themselves that they were not as strong as they seemed; and this has contributed to a quelling of the spread of Pro-Jap feeling. We know that the Japs are well aware of our existence in the bush. They even know that we are operating a teleradio and that its call sign is BTU - and yet to-date no serious attempt has been made to contact us. We prefer the opinion that the frequent coastal patrols although out to get information are reticent about venturing into the hills. They know of our stores drops. In my opinion we need not expect much danger of them coming after us. It would be a big operation for them to keep up a supply line, etc.; and they could not hope for any success without native guides. The latter were eager to lead the Japs to unarmed individual civilians; but I am certain they will never exhibit the same eagerness against our number and arms.

208 Field W.T.Sets: - We have four of these mobile sets; and we have asked for four more. So far they have withstood satisfactory tests here; and I am certain they will be of great value to us. The unwieldy 33 Sets can be safely based while these small jobs are used by scouting parties to report the information back. They have worked well here over a distance of 30 miles which is more than we ask.
Communications:— Three, and probably four, 3B Teleradios will shortly be in operation throughout the island; and my object is to do the work necessary with as little traffic as possible.

Present instructions are that in addition to sending all coast-watch reports to KEN it is also necessary to keep VIG informed. That has been easy in the past few months, and has not entailed any material increase in traffic, because BTU has been more or less the only station on the air here. But when these other stations get going a continuation of the same order must mean somewhat of a cluttering-up of the air in so small an area. I would suggest that all stations continue to report direct to KEN in the matter of coast-watch reports; but that whatever is necessary to be passed on to VIG be decided and done by KEN. KEN has better facilities to do that than we have here. Approval of that suggestion would make things much easier here; and would leave BTU only to keep the usual daily skeds with VIG for any emergency purpose arising in the island.

Back of time forces me to conclude these notes. There is much more which could have been included under better circumstances. I hope for another opportunity later.

It will be noted that I have marked each paragraph of these notes to facilitate any reference you may make in signals regarding them. I retain a copy here.

[Signature]

L. LANVR
28/4/43
Rough Diagram of SOUGAINVILLE and BUKA to illustrate proposed plan of intelligence organisation to cover the whole area:

Areas frequently patrolled by the enemy.
- Areas under enemy occupation.
- Approximate location of 38 Interference Sets.
- Approximate location of the mobile 208 Field W.T. Sets working in conjunction with bases as indicated by dotted lines.

W. C. Read
Lt. R.A.A. V.R.
29/4/43.