

Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference NEWSLETTER



“A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY”



Delegates at the eleventh Pacific Immigration Directors Conference in Apia, Samoa.

“A great responsibility” was how the Prime Minister of Samoa described the work of the heads of immigration at the opening to this year’s annual Pacific Immigration Directors’ Conference in Apia, in August 2007.

This was the eleventh annual PIDC. Taking part were 24 participants representing 16 countries as well as representatives from related regional and international agencies.

In his address the Prime Minister emphasised the importance of the PIDC as a focal point for communication, collaboration and cooperation, particularly in the context of Pacific nations’ vulnerability to terrorism and trans-national crime. He continued by stressing the role of immigration officers in ensuring safety and security and described the positive progress made by PIDC over the last 11 years in supporting them in this task.

Over the three days of the conference,

discussions took place on a range of issues from legislative strengthening, to human trafficking and illegal migration, to training and enhancing communication. As the outgoing Chair, Api Fiso commented, one of PIDC’s great strengths was its ability to deal with such issues as a family, and this was very much evident during discussions.

The conference also provided the forum for a number of farewells. It was Matthew Gibbs’ last conference as head of the PIDC secretariat, and also a final conference for Nunia Kamikamica, the secretariat’s administrative officer, and Tutai Toru, the Cook Islands’ Principal Immigration Officer.

The generous hospitality of Samoa Immigration and all those involved in organising and hosting the conference was a fitting tribute to these farewells and ensured a lively and friendly event.

+ A copy of the conference communiqué is available on the PIDC website (www.pidcsec.org) in both English and French.

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Calendar of Up-Coming Events

- I Regional Secretariat meeting (Suva, Fiji)
15 January 2008
- II PIDC Management Board meeting (Noumea, New Caledonia)
6th - 7th February 2008
- III Global Forum to Fight Human Trafficking (Vienna, Austria)
13th- 15th February 2008



Statement from the Chair of the PIDC

Poloma Komiti was elected chair of the PIDC at the annual conference in Samoa in August this year. He writes:

Firstly, I would like to extend my thanks and the thanks of PIDC to Api Fiso and Immigration New Zealand for the way in which they have chaired this organisation since the annual conference in Wellington in 2006. It has been a successful year of consolidation and strengthening that has seen PIDC's profile and its work reach new highs.

It is in this context that I look forward to my year as PIDC Chair. We are well placed to meet new challenges and to continue to work hard for each other.

I was sad to say farewell to Matthew Gibbs at this year's annual conference. This was his fourth conference and he has worked tirelessly as head of our secretariat over these years.

However, I am delighted to welcome Viliami Lolohea as our new head of secretariat. Viliami joins us from Tongan immigration and will bring a wealth of skills and knowledge to the organisation. I am looking forward to working with him over the course of my year as Chair.

My next major task for PIDC will be to chair a meeting of the PIDC Management Board in February. This provides a great opportunity for us to give direction to the secretariat and develop the organisation's work plan. I am also very pleased that New Caledonia has volunteered to host this meeting as it provides an added opportunity for us to engage with one of our members and develop closer ties.



The new PIDC Chairman, Poloma Komiti addressing delegates at the 11th PIDC in Apia, Samoa.

From the Desk of the PIDC Secretariat

The new Head of the PIDC Secretariat, Viliami Lolohea writes:

Malo le lelei! I have only been the Head of the Secretariat for just over a month, but in this short time I have been impressed by the breadth and depth of the work of the organisation. From the Annual Conference, to training events, to policy development, to our good relations with other agencies, this edition of the newsletter provides a great insight into that work.

Credit must be given to Matthew Gibbs, my predecessor, for all his hard work in making the secretariat and the PIDC what it is today. I am looking forward to continuing his good work and helping to move the PIDC to an even higher level.

Akuila Ratu and Matt Capper continue to raise the standard of the research we undertake. Our work in this area continues to receive increased recognition within the region and globally.

We have just distributed our new annual collection plan to all our members, and are looking forward to receiving responses in February. Together, these will give us the most accurate picture yet of migration and migration issues in the Pacific.

Eroni Rokisi, our attachment from Fiji Immigration, is increasingly taking charge of the finances and administrative work of the secretariat, as well as providing invaluable input into other areas of our work.

I have recently been engaged in a round of meetings with the various missions here in Suva, developing relationships and simultaneously raising the profile of the organisation. I am also looking forward to the first management board of the year in early February, and would like to thank New Caledonia for agreeing to host us. There are a number of important issues on the agenda, including discussions on how to develop the PIDC's new strategic plan.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact me or the secretariat. You will also find our website (www.pidcsec.org) a useful source of information, and in particular the Members Area containing PIDC documents, reports and corporate information.

I wish you all the best and look forward to working and meeting with you over the coming year.



Mathew Gibbs (right) congratulating Viliami (left) on his new appointment as well as officially handing over the reins of the secretariat .

Operation Paradise

Immigration New Zealand had reported on the build up to 'Operation Paradise' in the July 2007 Issue of the PIDC Newsletter. The exercise funded and co-ordinated by Immigration New Zealand took place on 22 July - 1 August 2007. It involved immigration and custom departments of Samoa and Tonga in addition to observers from Australia, Fiji, Palau and PNG as representatives of the PIDC Management Board. Everyone involved felt the exercise was very valuable and they even managed to have a lot of fun along the way. PIDC expresses thanks to Immigration New Zealand's Craig White for his excellent work developing and coordinating the exercise as the Exercise Director.

The practical exercise tested the business processes and related matters surrounding the removal of third country nationals, including Samoa and Tonga Immigrations' ability to deal with the location, assessment, detention, charging and removal of third country nationals found guilty of immigration malpractice in their respective country. The transit visa application stages of the exercise served to gain a more thorough understanding of New Zealand and Australian transit visa processes. At the end of the exercise an evaluation followed where participants and observers agreed to the lessons that the exercise brought out.

The exercise highlighted a number of important areas for PIDC members including:

- Interviewing – gathering important information, recording and analysing information.

- Information exchange – real-time exchange of intelligence between PIDC members to occur immediately once information is gained.
- Communication – to hold a generic list of contact points for each PIDC member country.
- Legislation/policy – immigration officers need to have a clear understanding of who they can refuse entry to including visa free nationals.
- Transit – early engagement with all stakeholders including Police, customs, airlines, airport authorities and transiting country immigration authorities.

Overall the exercise was successful for a number of reasons which include: the successful achievement of the exercise objectives, excellent lines of communication displayed by all involved parties, the achievement of timely and effective dissemination of information and use of appropriate interdiction activities as the suspect identified as 'Mr X' travelled through the region, questioned documents were appropriately handled and secured, chains of custody requirements were maintained and the exercise organisation, logistics and briefing mechanisms operated efficiently.

Immigration New Zealand 
TE RATONGA MANENE



A Samoa Immigration Official and a Police Officer escort Mr X (left) out of the airplane after arriving from Tonga.

Progress in developing laws to combat human trafficking and people smuggling in the Pacific

In the July 2007 edition of the PIDC newsletter my colleague Daiana Buresova and I here in the Legal Drafting Unit of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) reported on the development of a Model Counter Terrorism and Transnational Organised Crime Bill for Pacific Island Countries (PIC). The Model Law includes specific provisions to deal with Human Trafficking and People Smuggling.

Pacific Island Forum Secretariat Criminal Deportees Project

The Model Law was completed in July 2007. Since then work has been undertaken with 12 Pacific Island Countries to prepare draft legislation to adapt the Model Law for each country's specific circumstances.

This work has consisted of the following:

Country	Legislation drafted
1. Federated States of Micronesia	Complete Model Law
2. Tuvalu	Complete Model Law
3. Cook Islands	Amending legislation to fill gaps in laws required to comply with the 13 UN Counter Terrorism Instruments, the Transnational Organised Crime Convention and the two Protocols to the Convention concerning Human Trafficking and People Smuggling.
4. Palau	As above
5. Tonga	As above
6. Vanuatu	As above
7. Nauru	As above

In addition a copy of the Model Law has been provided to the Attorneys General for the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Kiribati and Niue. Following further discussions with the Attorneys General for each of these PIC it is anticipated that draft legislation (either the complete Model Law or amending legislation to fill any gaps) will be prepared in the first part of 2008.

At this stage no formal approach has been made to provide draft legislation for Fiji and the Solomon Islands. In October 2007 the Cook Islands Parliament approved the legislation prepared earlier by the Legal Drafting Unit.

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Participants at the UNODC/PIFS workshop in Port Moresby, PNG in December 2007.

Deportation policies implemented by a number of countries including Australia, New Zealand and the United States have been questioned as to the impact these policies may have upon the Pacific state where the deportee is returned. It has been argued that the consequences of these policies is contributing to increasing crime rates and an increase in violent crime, which domestic law enforcement establishments are not sufficiently equipped to manage.

This situation has led to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) initiating a Criminal Deportees project, which was endorsed by the 2007 Forum Regional Security Committee (FRSC) meeting and is headed by the PIFS Regional Security Adviser, Matt Leslie. As recorded in the FRSC session one outcomes for Agenda Item 3 – Trends in Transnational Organised Crime in the Pacific; the Committee: noted the current and emerging threats highlighted in the 2007 Transnational Crime Strategic Assessment including an increasing number of criminal deportees and requested the Forum Secretariat, together with key stakeholders, to develop strategies to tackle the issues. The objective of this project is to qualify the issue of criminal deportees for Forum Members', identify the regional and international law enforcement issues, and develop strategies to manage these.

The project has already begun with regional consultations having been undertaken with the Kingdom of Tonga and the Cook Islands, with Samoa to be visited in early 2008. These three countries have been identified as the pilot countries for this project due to a perceived existing domestic problem with respect to criminal deportees. Additionally, to ensure that the project identifies all the relevant issues, five key groups have been identified within the project; Government; Law Enforcement; Social Infrastructure; and Criminal Deportees (of the FICs) as well as the three key external countries whose deportation policies have been questioned (namely, Australia, New Zealand and the United States). Discussions with these groups enable a comprehensive analysis to be completed.

Importantly, the regional consultations will enable the provision of an assessment to be completed for the 2008 FRSC meeting. This assessment will examine the issue of criminal deportees and also review existing deportation policies. While it has been argued that deportation policies are contributing to

increasing crime rates and an increase in violent crime, which domestic law enforcement establishments are not sufficiently equipped to manage, there is a need to obtain the data required to adequately assess and analyse this. The analysis will enable the provision of strategic policy advice to Forum Island Countries.

Samoa Immigration living the 2007 South Pacific Games dream



Staff members of Samoa Immigration

The 2007 South Pacific Games were held in Samoa from 25th August to 8th September 2007. The games involved a total of 22 countries and 4649 athletes and officials who took part in 33 different sports.

There was an amazing atmosphere throughout the games with the whole country working together for a fantastic and memorable event. The opening and closing ceremony had traditional Samoan elements with an opening ava ceremony, traditional dancing and fire dancing and singing. The theme song and dance told the story of sina and the eel, explaining how the first coconut came to grow in Samoa.

Immigration prepared for the games through the SPG organising committee (SPGOC) and the Sub Committee for border operations. The goal of the SPGOC was to work together to prepare for an increased number of travellers before, during and after the games. As part of the Committee, Immigration pre cleared all athletes and officials, which involved checking names of athletes against the alert list on Samoa's BMS (Border Management System). At the airport, designated processing lanes were placed in the arrival hall for SPG officials and athletes to improve passenger flows. The airport emergency response services were also improved with new equipment for the fire and rescue team.

Samoa Immigration focused on strengthening its weakest point, Matautu wharf. The number of processing terminals at the wharf was increased with

extra computers and scanners. New equipment, including imaging authenticate scanners to improve travel document security, was installed and overall security was increased with all personal required to carry ID.

Even though Samoa stopped for the 2 weeks of the Games, Immigration as an essential service did not have much time to go and see many of the events. With 40 extra flights, officers were kept busy all night processing passengers and still had to be in the office at 9 am the next day. Immigration kept in the spirit of the games by watching it on TV in the departure lounge once flights had been cleared. Many of the Immigration officers really enjoyed meeting athletes from all over the Pacific, many of whom were record holders and gold medallists.

Immigration is still benefiting from preparation and work done for the SPG. The SPG established tighter security measures and more efficient processes and procedures for dealing with increased numbers of travellers, which helped Immigration in the busy Christmas season. The SPG has strengthened relations and improved cooperation and communication with all border agencies, who continue to work hard through the festive season to ensure a safe and secure Samoa. Live the dream!

Fiji Immigration's student permit awareness program

Fiji Immigration records reveal that foreign students and their dependants make up a large percentage of over-stayers in the country. This has strained immigration resources in its effort to track down this specific group of over-stayers. Additionally the state has been losing revenue from student over-stayers as no payments are made to regularize their study permit status in Fiji.



Orisi Ravuso of Fiji Immigration stressing a point during the student permit awareness program presentation

Findings from the over-stayer record analysis subsequently influenced the department's decision to address the issue through an educational awareness campaign which targeted all educational stakeholders directly involved in the welfare of foreign students. The department also invited representatives from regional embassies based in Suva as it provided the ideal opportunity to draw their attention to one of the major issues affecting citizens from their respective countries. The purpose of the program was to educate all stakeholders on the requirements of



Participants at the Fiji immigration student permit awareness presentation in Suva, Fiji.

student permit; to create awareness on Fiji's Immigration Act and Policies governing student permit and to discuss ways of improving service delivery and law enforcement. One of the underlying objectives was the need to reduce the cases of students overstaying their permits in addition to collecting lost revenue due to the State.

Finally after much planning and organizing, in October 2007 the Department of Immigration ran the program where the department targeted selected primary and secondary schools and regional institutions based in Fiji. This saw immigration representatives traveling throughout the Fiji Islands to educate stakeholders on the issue. At the end of the training participants expressed approval to the department's program as it brought to the fore the realization that many educational stakeholders were ignorant to the issue. Participants recognized the important roles they could play as law enforcement officers by monitoring their respective students' study permits. The highlight of the program was when a number of educational institutions like the Fiji Institute of Technology made an undertaking to work with Fiji Immigration in the verification and monitoring process of student permit holders at their institution.

Can you spot a forged passport?

PIDC in coordination with the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) delivered an Advanced Document Examination (ADE) training course in Port Vila, Vanuatu from 19 - 21 September 2007. This specialist course was open to all PIDC members. One attendee Mohner Esiel the Chief of Immigration and Labour in the Federated State of Micronesia (FSM) said the training provided an excellent opportunity for him to be part of an "elite group of immigration scholars."

The course trained immigration officers in forensic decision making process, the best use of document examination equipment with practical exercises and the identification of paper and security features. The course also included hands on examination of documents to detect fraud and recording methodology for examinations and results.

The course provided participants with the opportunity to learn investigative skills that would assist them in their daily work activities. Participants highly recommended the practicality and applicability of the training in addition to indicating their willingness to participate in future training. Mohner Esiel found the training particularly useful with regard to his immigration department's interaction and investigation of nationalities from Indonesia, Malaysia and China among other nationalities west of the FSM. He was enthusiastic about how the course improved officers' skills in detecting potential fraud, forgeries and other illegal activities encountered in borders throughout the region.

Mr Esiel reported that on a broader scale, it has been his goal to help upgrade and enhance the immigration knowledge and understanding of his officers and the vital role they play in reducing crime and enhancing security through their work.



Participants at the Advanced Document Examination Training in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

Mr Esiel believes the ADE training has assisted and placed him in a much stronger and knowledgeable position to impart to his officers skills and lessons to guide their investigative work, and will contribute to his plans to compile an immigration reference guide manual .



ADE course participants busy at work

Collaborations to Achieve Regionalism

Robert Taylor Head of the OCO Secretariat writes:



Customs, in the past, was tasked within each of the Pacific customs administrations to collect revenue which was determined to be one of the main source or the actual main source

of revenue for the government budgets. This means that collection of revenue becomes the pivotal role of customs and this was accompanied by a trade facilitation process of providing a level playing field for mainly national entrepreneurs. However, the nature of the trading fields nowadays has been reshaped by the competitive trading world which in turn provides a transition of role for customs, i.e. moving from revenue collection to border protection.

Border Protection is an essential role which consists of a collection of tasks and they could spread quite broadly especially at the border. However, for the purpose of identifying the most vital and regional roles we need to address only but a few of the main ones which will in turns accommodate the rest of the related roles. So if we are to name them, they are implementations of World Trade Organisation (WTO) Valuation, World Customs Organisation (WCO) Framework of Standards, Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC), Rules of Origin (ROO), Border Cash Reporting (BCR), Passenger Processing, Leisure Crafts Monitoring, Legislation Review, and Export and Import Processing Systems. These responsibilities are bound to

provide reliable border security taking for granted the fact that a common legislation is in place to produce a harmonized border control system within the region.

Nationally, a Customs Administration cannot afford to implement the optimum control required at its border unless other border agencies and inter-related organizations (Whether GO or NGO) are pulled together to utilize their available resources for the afore-said purpose. It is the same line of thinking for the Pacific Regional level where collaborative efforts are required regionally in order to achieve efficient and effective border security and sharing of information. So similarly to the national level, we require collaborative efforts from our regional colleagues such as the Pacific Immigration Directors Conference (PIDC), South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), Regional Marine Program (RMP), Asia/ (Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), Forum Secretariat Divisions, etc. We also have to reach out to the national level to encourage and assist them in implementing our decision making which was done at the regional level. This is the only opportunity where we will really be at the national back yard so that there is assurances of getting things done.

So, from OCO, we are grateful for the continuous collaborative efforts contributed so far by our regional colleagues and we are looking forward to the continuation of that in the coming future. We, from the Secretariat of the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO), support the idea of harmonizing the region in customs initiatives for compatibility. We wish you all the best during the up-coming Christmas season and may you all have a prosperous new year. May I also avail myself of this opportunity to renew the assurance of my highest consideration to all our regional colleagues, our stakeholders and our OCO members.



Samoa custom officials at the Faleolo International Airport checking Mr X's luggage and carry bags after being escorted by immigration and police officers out of the queue upon arriving from a Tonga flight during Operation Paradise.

Briefly in 2007.....

Immigration issues under the spotlight

In 2007, like in previous years immigration news was rarely far from the headlines. So as the year draws to a close we thought we would highlight some of the work of immigration that made the news in the Pacific.

January 10 - Over a dozen employers in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas (CNMI) were under surveillance for possible involvement in illegal recruitment and sponsorship activities.

February 26 - The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) arrested two Chinese nationals living in American Samoa in connection with charges of aiding the transportation of women from China and other nations to engage in prostitution in the territory.



Meipo of Samoa Immigration checking passenger passports at the Faleolo International Airport.

April 19 - The CNMI Division of Immigration was investigating a case involving a suspected human trafficking victim, which led authorities to prevent another worker from boarding a flight in China for Saipan.

May 14 - Two foreign nationals convicted in Palau of people trafficking were each sentenced to 20 years imprisonment and US\$50 000 in fines.

June 1 - Three foreign nationals were in Police custody in Vanimo after they were caught trying to enter PNG illegally through Indonesia. The three African men, in their twenties, were apprehended by Police after they were dropped off by a boat close to Vanimo at 3am on Wednesday morning.

June 19 - An investigation was ordered by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in PNG to identify the people behind an alleged scheme to

smuggle 20 passports across the PNG/Indonesia border. The investigation was ordered following the arrest of two foreigners from Malaysia and Indonesia at the border post at Wutung in Sandaun province with the 20 passports.



Delegates at the 11th PIDC in Apia, Samoa. Christine Capron (left) of New Caledonia and (right) Joe Giramur of Palau

September 17 - The Australian Federal Police believed that drug dealers were using the Pacific island countries as a place to meet couriers who arrived from South America to avoid suspicion. The revelation came in the wake of a drug bust where Fiji police seized about 100 cubes of white substances that were confirmed to be cocaine.

September 20 - Five Indonesian refugees who escaped from Papua New Guinea authorities were caught by Australian authorities on an island between PNG and Australia.

October 16 - Four foreigners were picked up in a joint immigration-police operation in the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea for alleged violation of immigration and labour laws.

October 22 - Five persons were arrested for engaging in document fraud, employment of aliens and inducement by fraudulent misrepresentation in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

November 5 - The Solomon Island police and immigration officials arrested five Asians for allegedly violating their work permits.

November 20 - Two Iranian nationals allegedly involved in human trafficking operations were allegedly stopped in the Philippines while attempting to leave for the Republic of Palau.

These news items have been extracted from articles in the following sources: The Marianas Variety, CNMI; Pacnews, Fiji Times, PNG Post-Courier, Solomon Star and the Palau Horizon.