



Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary

Highlands Eastern End Divisional Command
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Western Highlands Province

NATEL 2022 OPERATIONS DE-BRIEF – WHP & JIWAKA

OVERVIEW

This report is prepared as de-brief for 2022 National General Election Operations that was conducted recently. Three Discipline Forces were called out to provide security cover for this National event with Police being the lead agency. The Operations were carried out under the Police Commissioner's specific direction and Concept of Operation, "A Free, Fair, Safe & Secure 2022 Natel Operations".

Under the Commissioner's General Orders and Concept of Operations, the Operation Code Name: "**Protect National Sovereignty**" was developed for execution during Natel '22 Security Operations in Western Highlands Province.

This brief outlines a number issues and challenges during the 2022 National General Elections with recommendations to be seriously considered for preparations before the next General Election.

SWOT Analysis

To help with the report preparations, the SWOT Analysis model is recommended so that a standard and uniform structure is used for reporting.

Responsibility	RPNGC	JSTF	PNGEC	NAT. GOVT
Strengths	✓			
Weaknesses	✓			
Opportunities		✓	✓	✓
Threats		✓	✓	✓

1.00: Strengths and Weaknesses

1. Discuss what had been our **strength** or what really **worked well** in the pre-natel and polling / counting phase.

2. Discuss what had been our **weakness** or what **that did not work well** for us in the pre-natel and polling / counting phases'

2.00: Opportunities and Threats

1. Discuss what had been the **opportunities** or what other organisations such as the PNGEC, JSTF and the National Government **did that really worked well** in the pre-natel and polling / counting phase.

2. Discuss what had been the **threats** or what other organisations such as the PNGEC, JSTF and the National Government **did that did not work well** for us in the pre-natel and polling / counting phases'

PRE-NATEL OPERATIONS – JIWAKA

Responsibility	RPNGC	JSTF	PNGEC	NAT. GOVT
Strengths	- 528 Mbrs -144 Reg -63 Ex-service -8 Reservists -320 CAP -9 vehicles -10 firearms -Funds			
Weaknesses	-Ammunitions -Gas crowd control			
Opportunities				
Threats				

Strengths

- A total of 528 members including regulars, reservists, Auxiliary police
- 8 vehicles but are very old and need replacement. Got two new vehicles recently on the eve of the elections.
- 10 firearms which are very old; no ammunicions.
- A total amount of K128,000.00 was allocated to

Weaknesses

- The total local members cannot be deployed to all polling locations as this is not enough to cater for all.
- Vehicles very unreliable for quick responses and remote roads.
- Firearms were very old and need replacement; no ammunitions is a high risk.
- Funds were released very late.
- Provincial Government/Administrations not taking ;ownership and playing active role on the election process

Opportunities

- Use of community based organizations for awareness campaigns.
- Polling rollover teams provided most needed assistances and filled in gaps.
- QRF responses have at least covered areas that were accessible.

Threats

- Electoral Commission's inconsistencies in addressing issues timely; deliberate delays in decision-making
- QRF behavior during the election process
- Lack of manpower to cover all polling locations
- Lack of manpower to cover all communities in awareness.

Pre-Natel '22 Operations for Western Highlands Province were planned for execution during Christmas/ New Year Operations that would see a continuation after the New Year Operations. Plans were in place for awareness campaign in the Districts, Public places, Church gatherings, Schools and through the media. Intel collection and analysis, identification of target areas were in place and commencement of operation Code Name: "**Eagle Eyes**" was launched to clean up Mt. Hagen City by clearing the Animal Market, Street Selling, offensive weapon carrying and drugs.

However, the operation lacked most needed resources and logistics timely to further progress into the remote communities.

Provincial Election Steering Committee was non-existence in the Province until we forcefully entered the Provincial Headquarters and discussed with the Provincial Administrator and a committee was established for coordination of the National General Elections.

The launching of the Joint Security Force Operations in the Highlands was held in Mt. Hagen, WHP, for the Highlands Eastern End and Highlands Western End Divisions. Under financially difficult situation, we managed to stage the launching parade and refreshment successfully with services provided on credit basis and later paid off.

Common Roll up-date is seen to be one of the major causes of the election related violence in the province. The common roll up-date of the voting population was not done and displayed for quality checks and vetting. As a result, many voting population missed out on voting as their names were not registered.

ELECTION PROPER – WHP & JIWAKA

Strengths

- Local Police
- Intel Data collection done and hotspot areas identified
- Additional new Vehicles and hired vehicles
- Firearms/Ammunitions though we needed more but at least few ammos delivered to fill the vacuum.
- Road networks that connects most rural communities

Weaknesses

Opportunities

- Armored vehicles

Threats

- Buildup of firearms in the communities

The Issue of Writs for the 2022 National General Elections throughout the country were deferred due to administrative set-backs and issues. In Western Highlands Province, before the Issue of Writs and commencement of nominations, the appointment of the Returning Officer (RO) for Hagen Open Electorate was challenged in court after another RO was allegedly appointed and released. This has created a lot of chaos and the city had come to a stand-still for few days and further delaying the Issue of Writs for Mt. Hagen Open Seat.

Another contributing factor as observed is the poor updating of the common roll for the voting population. The draft update of the common rolls for Western Highlands Province were never released for proof check and confirmation before a final copy was printed for the general election until just before the Issue of Writs.

This has caused a lot of frustration and confusion among the voting population and many voting population missed out in voting as their names were not on the common roll thus creating opportunities for block-voting, hijacking ballot papers and splitting ballot papers among candidates of interest whilst the vulnerable groups just appeared for the interest of voting but simply denied and became spectators.

The campaign period was short-lived due to delays in the Issued of Writs.

The deployment of Quick Response Force (QRF) and polling troops into the polling locations in both WHP and Jiwaka went well with limited human resources and logistics. Although there were issues of limited manpower into the polling locations, polling went peacefully in both provinces despite minor common problems such as block voting, hijacking, threatening, bribery and so forth.

Insertion and extraction of polling teams with security forces into Jimi and Kambia were delayed due to bad weather.

Counting commenced at a snail-pace with a few hiccups both administratively and operationally but picked up momentum. There were few suspensions of the counting in all the counting centers for Jiwaka in Banz but continued until declarations made just on the close of Return of Writs under very extreme circumstances.

POST NATEL – WHP & JIWAKA

Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunities

Threats

- Bad weather that hindered insertion and extraction by choppers.
- Bad behavior of QRF that created unacceptable situation.
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The after-math of the National General Election in any given time has always been a night-mare in the Highlands of PNG. There is no difference in this year's National General Election.

In Jiwaka Province, when the declaration for North Waghi Electorate was made, few isolated incidences occurred with no serious incident reported but with the declarations of the other two open seats and the Regional Seat, there were some level of violence, destructions to properties and road blockages that need urgent and prompt attention by way of investigations into the incidents. There were alleged shooting by our Joint Security Forces (JSTF) and property destruction by supporters of rival candidates.

The worst of all is the un-provoked shooting by Security Forces instantly killing four (4) civilians and injuring/wounding nineteen (19) others who were sent to hospital ICU from the Kuli Pin Tribe of the Anglimb LLG of Jiwaka Province. This incident needs urgent investigation as the Anglimb Section of the Highlands Highway is still tense.

NATEL 2022 FINANCIAL EXPANDITURES

Strengths

- A total of 242,000.00 was allocated to WHP for Natel Ops in 2 x trenches of K121,000.00 for each trench.
- A total of K128,000.00 was allocated to Jiwaka in 2 x trenches of K64,000.00 for each trench.
- Funds were managed at the Divisional HQ, HEED and drawn down from there.

Weaknesses

- Many unanticipated activities surfaced during the election which were not captured in the budget.

Opportunities

- Borrowed funds from other activities to cater for the unanticipated activities.

Threats

Western Highlands Province was allocated a sum of K242,000.00 for the Natel Operations in the province. The funds were released very late and in two sets/trenches of K121,000.00. I was the duly authorized officer to sign the requisitions and counter-sign the Divisional cheques. The funds were managed and expended to fulfill its intended purposes.

There were unanticipated areas that popped up that needed to be covered as activities of priority such as the Regional Launching of the Joint Security Operations for the Highlands. Where there were short-falls in some areas, we had to take from some activities to offset the others.

All funds drawn down from this allocation were done with the approval from the ACP, Highlands Eastern End. The summery expenditure sheets are enclosed for reference.

GENERAL EXPERIENCES & OBSEVATIONS

Generally, my personal observations and experiences in this 2022 National General Election are of no difference to the past Elections. The same problems associated with resources, logistics, and finance still remain unsolved. Awareness, roadshows and Intel. Data collection have progressed well but the execution part of the Pre-Natel Ops were a problem due to late arrival or lack of most needed resources on a timely manner.

Situations are bound to occur as aftermath of the election process. Our security forces' approach to such aftermath situations must be diplomatic unless very necessary.

CHALLENGES

There are challenges during this Natel Operations that are not new. A few that were encountered are:

1. Common Roll not updated correctly with names missing from the roll. This is the cause of block voting and shared distribution of ballot papers between candidates;
2. Insufficient manpower to cover for polling teams which paved way for hijacking, dictate voting process and threatening voters and polling officials;
3. Late release of funds for Pre-Natel Ops;
4. Lack of proper education knowledge of the election process
5. Direct involvement of politicians, candidates, bureaucrats in illegal activities leading up to and during the whole election process

OPTIONS

There are many options but only a few are mentioned which are considered to be important for considerations;

- Electoral Commission to fix the Common Rolls and accurately place the names of people according to their villages, tribes, Council Wards and Districts and release the Common Roll six months early prior to the next National General Elections.
- Body cameras to be in every polling place to record every event which is an expensive exercise but will certainly reduce some level of violence.
- Properly train, equip and resource our QRF and polling troops so that one person is multi-skilled to do many things during elections.
- Develop and introduce the Electronic Voting System in future National Elections so that the same mistakes experienced in the past elections are not repeated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After serious analysis and considerations, it is strongly recommended that the last option ***“Develop and Introduce Electronic Voting System”*** as the best option to be considered and that must be complimented by the first option which suggests that ***“Electoral Commission must accurately up-date the Common Roll with voting population in their correct tribes, Ward Councils and Districts prior to the next election”***.

The National Government's failed NID Project to be re-activated and completed throughout the country while the Electoral Commission accurately up-dates the common rolls and the National Government introduces the Electronic Voting System two years before the next National Election. These two years are for training and awareness for the entire country while entering the data into the electronic system.

It will be a most expensive and costly exercise in the beginning but once the system is in place, it will pay off. It will ease out all the pains and sufferings faced during the National Elections in the long run.

CONCLUSION

Since Independence in 1975, PNG has conducted National General Elections in every five years and have learnt a lot of bad and corrupt experiences in the democratic process of conducting elections. This democratic process of election has been the only process where we get our political leaders elected into parliament.

By now we should have enough bad and corrupt experiences for the National Government to develop proper and best systems, practices, policies and strategies in place to conduct free, fair and safe elections. We preach a lot about free, fair and safe elections but our actions do not reflect our words, and are totally contrary. We have yet

to deliver a free, fair and safe elections without violence, harassment, intimidation and abuse.

If the Government is "for the people; by the people"; then it should act now for the people in developing systems and strategies in place for future National Elections and not repeating the same mistakes in every election

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Joe T. PURI
Chief Superintendent
Highlands Eastern End Division