in an onslaught, on Papua New Guinea, unimagined, unanticipated.'

New Zealand may have had a viewpoint on the ground, but nobody was
there asking for it. As something of a veteran in the Pacific, I have come to realise
that Australians and New Zealanders see the region very differently. It seems to
me that if we as a nation are to matter in our region, our reporters have to be there.

Still, the world coverage is in contrast to that on the long-running civil war
on Bougainville. Foreign journalists are kept out and perhaps it is just a
coincidence that its horrors have never been live on CNN and no super power
diplomatic initiatives have ever been launched to bring peace to its hard-pressed
people.
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Michael J. Field is the New Zealand-based South Pacific correspondent for
Agence France-Presse and covered the Sandline mercenary crisis in March
1997. This article was originally published in the Wellington Evening Post in
April 1997. By the time PJR went to press in November, Major Enuma and his
colleagues had been tried in a court-martial and trace monitors had arrived in
Bougainville after the Burnham Declaration for peace.

**Singirok claims denied**

Claims by sacked PNG military commander Jerry Singirok before the first
mercenary Commission of Inquiry that Sandline planned to hire a journalist
for $250,000 to 'positively report on Sandline' have been strongly
denied by the two named journalists.

By PETER CRONAU

THE JOURNALIST named during the first Commission of Inquiry into the
mercenary affair as the one who Sandline planned to hire for $250,000 to
'positively report on Sandline has denied the claims. Michael Ashworth, a 39-
year-old former British paratrooper and now freelance journalist, says while he
is sympathetic towards Sandline's operations, the claim that he was a paid
propagandist for them is incorrect.

The claims that Sandline had planned to hire an international journalist to
'positively report on Sandline to capture worldwide attention' were made on
April 9 by sacked Defence Force Commander Brigadier-General Jerry Singirok
and were published in The National the next day. The National misspelled the
journalist's name as 'Mike Asward'.

'I was paid a quarter of a million dollars? Oh my God, that is absolute
bullshit, absolute bullshit,' says Ashworth. 'It's absolutely scandalous.' He said
he wrote three articles on the mercenaries while in PNG, but not for Sandline.
He said he visited PNG on behalf of The Independent newspaper in London, the
Sydney Morning Herald and The Age to report on the mercenary operation, on
the basis of his close contact with Sandline International head Tim Spicer.

'If anyone wants to call me up to find out how much I was paid, well I
wasn't. I'm still trying to get paid, still trying to get payments from the Sydney
Morning Herald, from South African newspapers, and I'm absolutely stone
broke,' said Ashworth.

Last year, Ashworth reported for The Independent (UK) on the Sandline
operations in Sierra Leone, a report he said Spicer liked. Ashworth admits to
being fascinated by mercenaries, by the 'privatisation of violence, the privati-
Fri Pres: Media freedom in the Pacific

Assaults, arbitrary imprisonment, gaggings, threats, and defamation cases have become an increasing hazard for Pacific journalists. And they also face mounting pressure from governments to be accountable and to report the truth. But the issue is whose truth and accountability to whom?

By DAVID ROBIE

Title sequence: French riot police attack peaceful balloon-wielding protesters with in Noumea during 1987 as TV cameras capture the drama.
Cut to: Students are teargassed and a reporter is punched and booed by police on the Waigani campus of the University of Papua New Guinea in 1996.
Cut to talkback clip on Radio Kalang, 1993:
TIM NEVILLE: Their remarks to him were, or warnings, or threat, were that you better tell your minister, your brother, that he'd better back off on the forestry policy issues or you and your family are as good as dead.

ACROSS the South Pacific today, the news media are under siege as never before. In some countries journalists face brutal assaults, arbitrary imprisonment, gaggings, threats, defamation cases with the threat of bankruptcy and vilification. And they also face mounting pressure from governments to be accountable and to report the truth.

But the issue is whose truth and accountability to whom?

As Pacific journalists and news media become more professional and probing on the dilemmas of development, economic and social policy and issues such as corruption, there is a danger that some politicians want to restrict the media from meeting the public interest.

[Title frames run against cartoon images and Lucky Dube reggae theme music.]

Papua New Guinea is now facing pressure on the news media that is typical...