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sation of war'. Singirok also named another journalist in his evidence to the inquiry.

'In particular, he [Ashworth] was a house guest to Sean Dorney from ABC,' Singirok told the inquiry, according to *The National*. Sean Dorney, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's long-serving Port Moresby correspondent, denies the accusations of Singirok.

'To have Singirok come out and accuse me of harbouring a Sandline spy is an amusing twist on the fact that other people are accusing me of being the agent of the PNGDF,' said Dorney.

Dorney first met Ashworth one morning in a group of four journalists trying to fly to Wewak to see the mercenary training. After being refused access to Moem Barracks over several days, Ashworth told Dorney he had run short of money so Dorney said he offered Ashworth a room to stay for several nights.

'In terms of what Singirok was suggesting, that he was some highly paid infiltrator for the media, Mike was not the man. He knew very little about the media, and was seeking advice from me all the time as to what he should do,' said Dorney, who interviewed Ashworth for the ABC as an expert on Sandline and Executive Outcomes.

'Spicer told Singirok at one stage that they were going to spend \$240,000 on a media operation. Then all of a sudden this English journalist pops up who they knew nothing about, who came into the country with the help of Sandline, and he just assumed that this was the great media manipulator. But he never got to me, Ashworth,' said Dorney.

Dorney said the Agence France-Presse news agency also incorrectly reported that Sandline head Tim Spicer was staying in his house, although this was later retracted after Dorney complained.

Singirok declined to discuss the claim he made about Ashworth, but admitted he had no positive proof that Ashworth received a payment from Sandline.

'The information that I gave to the inquiry is still subjudice for the commission, and it would be totally unfair if I comment about the evidence that I've given,' he said. But he added Spicer was aware of the potential of a media leak and it was vital to get positive publicity - 'and you can understand why'.

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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 booted 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

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of harassment in the Asia-Pacific region in recent years. Sometimes the repression is direct. Other times it takes legal forms. Often the media have been the only voice questioning government abuses.

[NEW CALEDONIA ABC *Four Corners*: Clip of French army trucks: rumbling around corner out of bush. A military officer approaches journalists.]

'Gentlemen, please stop filming ...'

'He's asking us to stop filming.'

Sometimes the repression comes in the form of the murder of journalists bearing witness. In October 1975, five Australian journalists were killed in the village of Balibo while covering the Indonesian invasion of East Timor. This is the last report by reporter Greg Shackleton, sent the day before he and his colleagues were murdered by the Indonesians.

[EAST TIMOR Greg Shackleton/Channel Seven/John Pilger].

Why, they ask, are the Indonesians invading us? Why, they ask, if the Indonesians believe that Fretilin is communist, do they not send a delegation to Dili to find out?

Why, they ask, are the Australians not helping us? When the Japanese invaded, they did help us.

Why, they ask, are the Portuguese not helping us? We're still a Portuguese colony.

Who, they ask, will pay for the terrible damage to our homes? My man answer was that Australia would not send forces here — that's impossible.

However, I said, we could ask that Australia raise this fighting at the United Nations. That was possible.

At that, the second-in-charge rose to his feet, exclaimed 'comrade journalist', shook my hand, the rest shook my hand, and we were applauded for being Australian.

That's all they want, for the United Nations to care about what is happening here.

[Balibo village scene].

SHIRLEY SHACKLETON [Shackleton's wife]: *There're witnesses who say they heard the Australian journalists shouting, 'Australian journalists, no combat!'*

Then they said they heard firing and there was no more sound.

JOHN PILGER [off camera]: *What happened to Greg and his companions*

SHACKLETON: *I don't know whether it happened to Greg or which of the five... But the majority of them were hung up by their feet. Their sexual organs were removed and pushed into their mouths; they were stabbed with the short throwing knives the Indonesian soldiers carry.*

And it isn't known whether they asphyxiated, or whether they bled to death

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or whether some of them got stabbed in the heart and died quickly.

The feeling was that ... because this is quite a common way to punish people in East Timor.

So the Timorese have a fair idea that it takes a long time. They asphyxiate usually.

PILGER: *Did the Australian Government ever protest to the Indonesian government?*

SHACKLETON: *They claim they did. They claim that they asked.*

PILGER: *Publicly? Publicly protest?*

SHACKLETON: *No, they asked diplomatic questions which allowed them to get diplomatic answers.*

In Fiji, during 1987, when Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka staged two military coups, troops entered news media offices, some journalists were arrested and assaulted, and newspapers were forced to publish under a self-censorship regime.

One daily newspaper, the *Fiji Sun*, refused to publish under such oppression and closed.

[FIJI SBS/ABC *Four Corners* 1997/Wendy Bacon clip.]

Every year, World Press Freedom Day is celebrated to honour and acknowledge journalists who have been executed, murdered, assaulted, harassed or imprisoned while doing their duty to inform the people. It is also celebrated in the Pacific.

During 1996, journalists were arrested and jailed three times in Tonga and Papua New Guinea is facing its gravest legislative threat to media freedom.

[PAPUA NEW GUINEA EM TV 1996 Media Freedom clip.]

At the end of 1996, three tough draft news media laws were being drafted for introduction into Parliament in Papua New Guinea. They were the News Media Commission Bill, National Communication and Information Bill, and Freedom of Information Bill which many believe will lead to jailings of journalists, or at least exclusion of reporters who don't toe the government line.

[GRAPHICS: News Media Commission Bill (fines of up to K2000 for "unregistered" journalists); National Communication and Information Bill (journalists forced to divulge confidential sources); Freedom of Information (less freedom).]

OSEAH PHILEMON [*Post-Courier* editor]: *The media in PNG is going through a difficult time right now because somehow our elected leaders feel we have too much power*

Some allege that we are misusing our power and responsibility to the public and therefore they want to bring the press under close scrutiny by the Government.

I think that we are at a crossroads now and a lot will depend on how the

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members of Parliament deal with the Constitutional Review Commission report which is now before Parliament on media accountability.

So I think freedom of the media in Papua New Guinea is at a crossroads and only the elected leaders will decide which way we go. I am very concerned about it, and so are a lot of my colleagues, because media controlled by the Government will mean people will not be free to express their views on issues and matters that affect them.

ANNA SOLOMON [editor-in-chief of *The Independent* and chair of PNG Media Council]: *We have taken our good fortune in enjoying a free and open press for so long that there are some things that we should safeguard against ... we have not really tried to tackle ... Because freedom of expression and the media is enshrined in our constitution we have just come to accept that it is part of the life of the media in Papua New Guinea.*

POWES PARKOP [NGO spokesman and former *Wantok* editor]: *On the one hand there is indeed some attempt to regulate the press or restrict the freedom of the press — that much we can acknowledge.*

On the other hand, the days when we can say the press has no freedom — or you could take it further, the people have no freedom of expression and freedom of speech and so on — I think that's far off yet in my view

And I'm saying this because I think the social circumstances or political circumstances of Papua New Guinea for the Government or the state to be restrictive in this area because the political culture is such that it is democratic

People are used to speaking out. People are used to saying what they want to say.

The issue of licensing for news media and journalists began in 1987. This was when the notorious Media Tribunal Bill, proposed by then Communications Minister Gabriel Ramoi, was introduced.

But a national outcry forced the bill to be shelved.

ANNA SOLOMON: *The Gabriel Ramoi Bill was an example where the Government tried to come down and impose legislation which would have meant the end of the freedom we have enjoyed to date.*

This again brings home to us in the profession the importance of safeguarding the freedoms ... We are here today but could be gone tomorrow.

So we have to ensure that steps are taken now so that this vital part of democracy is ensured for the future of the journalists that come after us.

But even with the Bougainville conflict smouldering seven years after it began, Papua New Guinea is still a far cry from the coups in Fiji, or the independence struggle in New Caledonia.

During 1987, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation program *Four Corners* tried a novel approach in reporting the New Caledonian conflict.

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Jacques Karré, a reporter and activist from the pro-independence Radio Djiido, was engaged to do the story-telling

[NEW CALEDONIA 1987 ABC *Four Corners*. Clip of Karre introducing himself. Cut to batons and balloons ending with woman being brutally assaulted by riot police.]

...Allez!

PHILEMON: *Places like Fiji enjoy a free press. But like us Fiji is also undergoing a lot of changes and the Government of Fiji is right now looking at media freedom and ways of legislating against media freedom in Fiji.*

The other countries of the Pacific? Of course, it really differs from country to country. Western Samoa, American Samoa ... these are countries that enjoy freedom of the media comparable to Papua New Guinea. But on the whole you'll find the media of many small countries are under a lot of pressure by governments to report what the Government sees is the right thing to report ... reporting in government's favour.

MARGARET MOORE [then editor of the *Samoa Observer*]: *Our publisher and owner has made it very clear that we are here to look critically at what is happening in our community and our nation, and we'll do whatever we can to make sure that continues.*

I suppose our paper, Samoa Observer, is a little bit unlike the other papers in that it does tend to focus more on investigative journalism ... and there is a lot to investigate in Western Samoa.

In the Cook Islands, the daily newspaper *Cook Islands News* has twice been hauled before Parliament over alleged contempt because of cartoons that angered MPs.

ALEX SWORD [editor of the *Cook Islands News*]: *It's just a reflection of parliamentarians being very thin-skinned over what is a very frivolous issue and they have to learn to laugh at themselves basically.*

[Cartoon one]. *The first issue which we had to cope with was a cartoon which pointed out that Parliament is pretty much abusing freedom of speech, by disallowing and transferring an Opposition MP to the privileges committee.*

And Parliament — that's the government at the time — took offence to that and called us before them and in the end demanded that we apologise.

[Cartoon two]. *With the second issue, it's the case of two people watching television — an elderly woman and her husband — and the police are knocking at the door saying, 'We've come to arrest you'.*

And the guy sitting down watching television is saying, 'You've come to the wrong place. Go further up the road — that's where you'll find these people, they're insane.'

So three politicians actually stood in Parliament at the time — this is back

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in September last year (1995) — and they sort of voiced their concern over the cartoon which they said was ridiculing the mana of the members of Parliament.

But it wasn't until eight months later that they decided to do something about it and have now referred us — or the case — to their privileges committee to decide what they're going to do with the newspaper.

[TONGA ABC Foreign Correspondent 1996. Voice over goats scene.]

In Tonga, the media harassment has come in the form of imprisonment.

In October 1996, Kalafi Moala, editor of the *Times of Tonga*, deputy editor Filo 'Akau'ola, and member of Parliament 'Akilisi Pohiva were freed from prison after serving three weeks of a 30-day term for contempt of Parliament.

The Chief Justice ruled that the Legislative Assembly had violated the constitution and had imprisoned them illegally.

Pohiva and another politician, and Akau'ola were again detained in November, this time under the threat of sedition charges.

'AKILISI POHIVA [Tongan MP and publisher]: *Tonga is not a democratic country. The most vital element of a democratic government is accountability. There is a complete lack of accountability that causes corruption, misuse of resources and other evils in the country.*

[Boat and newspaper clip]. *Here is the newspaper the Tongan government doesn't like. With his newspaper Kel'ea, 'Akilisi Pohiva has been railing against government corruption.*

[Weaving song].

In Papua New Guinea, commentators like Powes Parkop are concerned that the media doesn't show more concern for Tonga and other regional issues — like West Papua for example, which is under Indonesian rule.

PARKOP: *There was some bomb attack in Saudi Arabia and that got a lot of coverage because Americans died, and at the same time there was this event inside West Papua, or Irian Jaya, where the army went to free hostages.*

This got limited coverage but a lot of people died too as a result of that.

[Cut away scene of OPM]. *The space which the media gives the people dying in America, and people dying in Papua New Guinea, or let's say Bougainville, or let's say West Papua, which is culturally closer to Papua New Guinea. We don't give them the same space.*

[Cut back to Parkop]. *I don't think we can necessarily follow any model in the world. I think we have got to design our own — whether it is a system of government, or it is laws relating to whatever ... or the laws relating to the press or the type of press we have.*

I don't think we can say let's pick up what is happening in Indonesia, or what's happening in Malaysia, and let's apply it here. Because the social culture, political backgrounds are different. We just have a different culture

their culture.

Radio and television have been the most affected by media bans or curbs in Papua New Guinea.

[Voice over 60 Minutes clock logo]. In 1992, the current affairs program 60 Minutes was banned for a time after Papua New Guinea's Chief Censor was offended by an interview with Madonna.

[Madonna UNLIKE A VIRGIN clip, 60 Minutes Nine Network.]

RICHARD CARLTON: *Madonna — you've only got to say the name and you've got an argument. She is quite simply a phenomenon, not just a singer, not just a dancer. No ... more an industry. And she is, of course, outrageous.*

If she is not trying to sell lurid photos of herself, she's shocking us with suggestive song lyrics and kinky costumes.

Since everyone now appears to know every detail of her private life, not to mention every private part of her body. One can only ask what's next ...

[Madonna lyrics.]

For nearly 10 years, Madonna has been pushing back the outer limits of outrage, sado-masochism, bisexuality, blasphemy, nudity ... The girl who started off as a disco-dancer has turned shock into success.

The major thing that strikes you when one meets you for the first time, like I have today, is that you're ...

MADONNA: *Small?*

Well, you're barely big enough to wield a microphone, let alone a whip?

MADONNA: *Hmmm!*

Do people say that to you?

MADONNA: *Well, it's not the size of the wand, it's what's behind it. I mean, size has nothing to do with it. Look how small Napoleon was ... I think small people try harder.*

Two years later, as the PNG Government moved towards its planned legislation for the media EMTV was pressured by a cabinet minister, Forest Minister Andrew Baing, not to broadcast an exclusive interview with Bougainville Revolutionary Army commander Sam Kaouna

[Newsclip on Baing/Bougainville.]

In 1996, Reporters Sans Frontières protested to the PNG Government over an assault on an EMTV journalist, Benny Malaisa. He was attacked by police while he was reporting on a student protest against the user pays policy.

[EMTV News 1996 University of PNG teargas incident clip.]

DORIS BUIYO: *The situation at Waigani as students protest against user-pays.*

Good evening, I'm Doris Buiyo.

And I'm Titi Gabi. Join me later in the bulletin.

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Students were teargassed and a reporter was punched and booted by police today on the Waigani campus of the University of Papua New Guinea

The protest, which started peacefully, was against the government user-pays policy, now affecting many government services, including health and education.

TTTI GABI: It started out peacefully, and according to student leaders was meant to be that way. But the situation got out of hand shortly after they marched through the main gate of the campus.

The students were stopped by National Capital District Commission police chief Philip Taku who told them he would not allow the march because his office had not been given the required seven days' notice.

PHILIP TAKU [Port Moresby police chief]: I have given you my written instructions yesterday, disapproving(sic) you to come out into the streets today to protest march.

Tempers flared and heated words were exchanged between student leaders and police, a start to a fiery situation.

Mr Taku left the scene to hold an urgent meeting with MPs at Parliament Haus. All the while, tempers and emotions were running high.

A fight broke out between police and students and involved females and students and then the worst — police opened fire.

Some students received pellet wounds, fortunately none of them serious. Our journalist, who was filming at the time, was punched and booted by a number of police officers who were chased by a large part of the crowd and even fellow officers.

It was like a mini-Vietnam, said one student, as others waved placards calling on the government to abolish its user-pays policy.

A major controversial issue for news media in Papua New Guinea is coverage of mining and forestry development issues.

PHILEMON: At the Post-Courier we try to give as much coverage as possible. There are areas like, I think, logging, apart from the actual lobby — anti-lobby and pro-lobby — has received wide-coverage.

[But] the media generally have not actually ventured into the project sites to actually see for themselves what is taking place in those project sites.

This is one of the failings of the media and it could be because of accessibility in those areas. Sometime you can only go in because the company that is doing the logging can take you in.

It's difficult for the media to find their own way in there.

[Voice over Rimbunan Hijau graphics]. One of Papua New Guinea's two national daily newspapers, The National, founded in 1993, is owned by a subsidiary of a Malaysian logging company which dominates the timber

industry.

When the paper was launched there was some controversy about its ownership, but this has eased in the past two years.

Nevertheless, the company, Rimbunan Hijau, which has also been expanding its news media interests in New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific region, has maintained a high media profile in Papua New Guinea.

In 1994, it was at the centre of a defamation case against Radio Kalang over a controversial program with popular talkback host Roger Hau'ofa.

[EMTV News 1993 clip].

DORIS BUTYO: [Then Forests Minister] Tim Neville faces threats for his tough stand against abuses in the forest industry

Government accused of delaying the proposed wood processing mill.

Anthony Temu renews calls for an inquiry into alleged immoral practices by leaders.

Good evening.

Allegations today that the Minister for Forests Tim Neville was threatened by some Malaysian businessmen for his tough stand on forestry.

Speaking on a radio talkback show today, Mr Neville said the threats were made through his brother.

HERMAN MIRIO: These allegations were made early this morning during a radio talkback show, its basis stemming from the Forest Minister's action to control the multimillion kina timber industry — which he claimed is not being controlled — by introducing the new forest industry guidelines which go before Parliament tomorrow.

TIM NEVILLE: It was at the Mobile Service Station in Lae at lunchtime. He was picking up his lunch. He was working for the company, Comelon, which the family owns. He was just going to pick something up and he was approached by four Malaysians who came up to him

They said, 'You're Greg Neville; you're the brother of the Forests Minister Tim Neville?'

And he said, 'Yeah. That's correct. What's it to you?'

And their remark to him, or warnings or threat, was you better tell your minister, your brother, he had better back off on the forestry issues otherwise you and your family are as good as dead.

MIRIO voice over: These revelations by Mr Neville did not go down well with the Minister of Provincial Affairs and Village Services, John Nilkare.

JOHN NILKARE [Provincial Affairs Minister]: I don't have Papua New Guineans wandering in Malaysia, or Singapore, or Australia, or New York threatening other people.

Why should they come here and threaten our people? Particularly ministers

of state, department heads, public servants, who are working in stressed conditions — they don't deserve to be threatened by foreigners.

They have no place in this country. They must go now.

MIRIO: *It was alleged by Rimbunan Hijau that the company had been accused during the talkback of being behind this, but denied it during a news conference this afternoon.*

FRANCIS TIONG [general manager of Rimbunan Hijau PNG Pty Ltd]: *That Rimbunan Hijau is responsible for that. Now I cannot have that. This is a very, very serious libel and it is slanderous.*

Initially vigorously defended by Radio Kalang, the case was eventually settled out of court after the appointment of a new chairman of the National Broadcasting Corporation, Renagi Lohia.

Full-page advertisements apologising to Rimbunan Hijau were carried in newspapers and undisclosed damages paid.

Although in the past few years, *The National* has made a major contribution to news coverage and media technology in Papua New Guinea, questions remain about its ownership and agenda.

PHILEMON: *That is a question the public at large should answer ... I think the question of whether a major company involved in the harvesting of PNG timber should own a newspaper in this country ... is a question ... that .. first the Government should decide whether morally it is the right thing to do.*

And whether that ownership means slanting stories in a certain direction to suit certain interests is something the Government needs to address.

We are dealing with a moral issue here.

A moral and political issue affecting the ... well, it is a constitutional issue too, freedom of the media — freedom of the press. It is freedom of the press being used in a certain way to serve certain interests.

And I think that is a question that the people of PNG and their government should answer. I don't think it is my role to pass judgement.

PARKOP: *Foreign ownership does have some bearing on the freedom of the press, like for example The National.*

The National will readily cover Forest Industries Association statements, or report something about Malaysia, or report something in favour of logging companies — because it is partly owned by logging companies.

In relation to the Post-Courier, there would be a lot of foreign coverage.

The major daily newspaper, *Post-Courier*, is also foreign-owned, being a small part of Rupert Murdoch's transnational, News Corporation.

But it has a significant Papua New Guinea minority shareholding and its editor rejects political claims that it is influenced editorially from abroad.

PHILEMON: *We have never received any directions from our parent*

company, News Corp, in Sydney to publish or not to publish anything. We have been allowed to exercise our freedom to report and to publish stories based on our judgements as Papua New Guineans and the way Papua New Guineans see them, not in the way it is seen from Sydney.

[SBS/EMTV UNDER THE SPELL? Response by John Eggins clip 1995.]

Papua New Guinea's news media has vigorously defended the freedom of expression guaranteed under the Constitution.

But with strict new laws and a general election this year, many people now say this is now jeopardised.

PHILEMON: *Right now it is under threat. It is a big question mark hanging over Papua New Guinea right now [And as I said to you] .. It will depend on how our elected leaders view the question of the Media Tribunal which the Constitutional Review Commission is pushing to establish to monitor media freedom — in the way the media operates in this country.*

That is serious because we don't know what the powers of the tribunal will be and it frightens me that the Government should go to the extent of setting up a watchdog for the media. The best course of action is to allow the media to be self-accountable through a Media Council.

ANNA SOLOMON: *Until we have really got our foundations strengthened — a Press Council operating strongly, vigorously — and until we have a Journalists' Association acting generally out of the way to promote the interests of the journalists in this country, our survival, our strength is not 100 per cent strong.*

PARKOP: *If the press exercises, like its own censorship, and say it will give space to only that sector — the business sector — because that's more important, they give us more money ... they make development... And the other sectors who are not involved in making money, they feel they're cut off, they are not heard, so they resort to other ways.*

[Credits over tear gas incident ending on beating of journalist].

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□ *David Robie is Lecturer in Journalism at the University of Papua New Guinea. He wrote, researched and directed the half-hour program, Fri Pres: Media Freedom in the Pacific. It was filmed in Papua New Guinea and elsewhere in the Pacific with some additional reporting by final year students Stevenson Liu (Vanuatu) and Priscilla Raepom (PNG) with Pacific View Productions. Offline and online editing were at Spectrum Film studios, Sydney, with Jackie Walker. Fri Pres was broadcast on EMTV on 5 and 6 May 1997. This is a slightly shortened version of the program and there are some variations between actual clips and the script.*