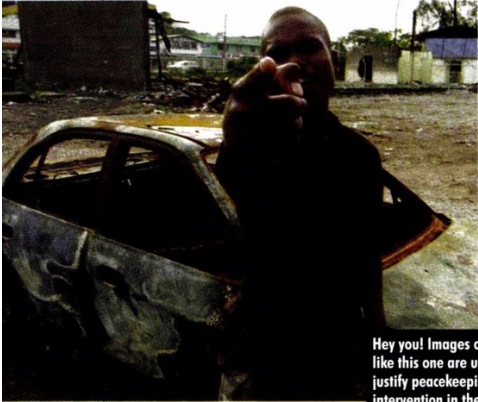


SOLOMON ISLANDS

Taking aim at paradise

'Coalition of the willing' to intervene in the Pacific



Hey you! Images of anger like this one are used to justify peacekeeping intervention in the Solomon Islands.

successful, with estimates of between 500 and 700 guns and high-powered weapons still in the hands of militants. The Government is now paralysed and significant foreign investment has departed the fragile economy.

Many people in the country – tired of four years of conflict and hardship in which an estimated 250 people have been killed – welcome the intervention.

However, the mission marks another dramatic shift away from a general policy of non-intervention in the affairs of sovereign nations. Australia now argues that it can't afford to have a failed state such as the

Solomons on its doorstep, saying that possible gunrunning, drug smuggling, militias and corruption all provide a breeding ground for terrorism. Media depictions of Solomon Islanders in balacavas toting guns reinforce this 'War on Terror' rhetoric. Indeed,

Australian Prime Minister John Howard has flagged a likely future for Australia in leading interventions like this one – outside the auspices of the United Nations – in other Pacific nations which are 'experiencing economic collapse, corruption and lawlessness'.

Chris Chevalier, who lived in the Solomons for 10 years and now works as Pacific Project Officer for Union Aid Abroad, is critical of this characterization of the terrorism threat and the failed state. 'The failed state is now part of the discourse of foreign policy to justify intervention and blame the victim. The Solomon Islands is a collection of islands and small societies. The post-colonial models of government imposed by the developed world don't work and have unravelled.'

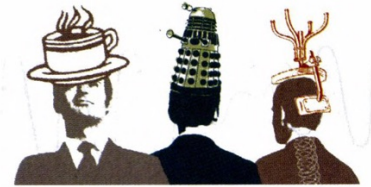
Restoring services, rebuilding the economy and community development are urgently needed. Chris Chevalier asks whether the Solomons' neighbours are willing to commit the type and level of assistance required. 'We need to be talking about a Marshall Plan here to revive the collapsed economy. Tens of millions will now be spent on military and police intervention. It's probably too big and has possibly come too late. Intelligent aid would have prevented this and much more effective aid will be needed in future for community development, strengthening civil society, and rebuilding the economy.'

Thalif Deen/IPS

Iraq

During a three-day June meeting in the southern Iraqi city of Najaf, a conference of 900 prominent Iraqi lawyers and politicians approved a blueprint for the appointment of a temporary government to draw up a new post-Saddam constitution. The move puts new pressure on the occupying forces to agree to some form of Iraqi self-rule, rather than the interim political council that US chief administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, plans to appoint himself. [Paul Bremer will be profiled in the NI next month.]

Zaki Yahya/Institute for War and Peace Reporting



Seriously...

You couldn't make this stuff up.

Fun for kids!

Those crrrrrazy US Missile Defense folks sure know how to keep the kids enthralled!

The US Missile Defense Agency is giving away kiddie colouring books.

Children can grip their accompanying 'cool crayons' and colour in Reagan's hair and a map of the US. It gets trickier to avoid going over the lines when it comes to colouring in the pictures of the 'ground-based midcourse defense', the 'interceptor missile' and the 'exoatmospheric kill vehicle', however.

The cool crayons, like some of the missiles the Agency plans to intercept, are made in China.

Have a go yourself by visiting: www.clw.org/nmd/Coloring_Book

Alternatively kids can go to the US Missile Defense website and click on 'Games' where they can learn to play Missile Defense softball! 'Imagine trying to hit a ball that has been thrown towards you with another ball in mid air! Better yet, TRY IT!' encourages the multi-billion-dollar agency. Yes, total spectrum dominance is fun, fun, fun! You can play it for yourselves at home! Here are the instructions:

What you need:

Two synthetic foam (or equivalent) soft-sided balls, at least one friend to help.

Directions:

Decide which of you will be the target missile and which will be the interceptor.

The person who is the target missile throws her or his ball into the air in an arch (as if it is a missile following the curve of the Earth) toward the other person with the interceptor ball.

The person with the interceptor ball then needs to try and hit the target ball with the interceptor ball, knocking it away before the target ball is able to hit him or her.

But hey, it's not just the US forces who know a good time when they see it. Last year a youth club in Cumbria was asked to run workshops as part of a family fun day at arms manufacturer British Aerospace. When asked if they needed a face painter, the nice woman from British Aerospace said they already had one who would be painting the kids in camouflage to fit the theme of the day.

'Which is?' asked the youth club.

'War,' she replied.

Politics with soul

Rhythms of resistance can be heard all over the world. **Adam Ma'anit** seeks them out.

Creak, creak, creak... tizzle, tizzle, pop!

The noisy roof of 'the club' is a corrugated-tin chorus of groans and feeble protests against the intense noon heat. Metallic pings punctuate the sleepy midday silence at Kakuma refugee camp in the northwest corner of Kenya. Most of the 60,000 refugees take siesta, under the UN-blue plastic canopy they are given for makeshift shelters. The heat swelters...

There, the music sounded different – special. Alive. The hot corrugated roof redirected sound waves in myriad ways. The noise from its relentless expansion and contraction added to the strange physics of the place. It was the music

though, which had its own quantum. Music was everything. Political – it was oxygen in 4/4 time.

Some of the refugees at the camp were Ethiopian and had studied abroad in 'friendly' countries like Angola, Cuba, China and Russia. They knew the songs of Cuba's Silvio Rodríguez, like his songs for the *guerrilleros* – resistance fighters – in El Salvador. Others hooped and hahed at the *chutzipah* of Fela Kuti's Afrobeat. And they loved reggae. Its chaka-chaka sound picked up by Nairobi mavericks singing in *sheng*, the Kenyan rhyming slang. Artists like Alpha Blondy from Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa's Lucky Dube were on heavy rotation. Here under the creaky roof of 'the club',

A local
highlife
band
performing
in Accra,
Ghana.