



Department of Foreign Affairs
Office of the Secretary

PRESS RELEASE

PAPUA NEW GUINEA – AUSTRALIA MUTUAL DEFENCE TREATY ALSO TO BE KNOWN AS THE “PUKPUK TREATY”

This is to provide some context into the PNG-Australia Mutual Defence Treaty-also to be known as the Pukpuk Treaty. A lot of mischievous and malicious inciteful misinformation is being propelled in the public domain about the proposed treaty.

PNG and Australia negotiated a Mutual Defence Treaty at the request of PNG. The text of the Treaty is now undergoing the treaty processes in both countries. The National Parliaments of the two countries will respectively take custody and ownership of the treaty document, where they will deliberate and determine whether or not to be bonded by the treaty.

The Pukpuk Treaty has two main parts:

- Mutual Defence and
- Defence Cooperation Areas

Other parts of the treaty are operational provisions to give effect to the above two central tenements of the Treaty.

Ongoing assessment of the capabilities and capacity of PNGDF 50 years on, established credible capability and capacity gaps that can limit the PNGDF from executing its fundamental constitutional duties to ensure the upholding and maintenance of the territorial integrity and sovereign independence of Papua New Guinea.

The Pukpuk Treaty negotiations centered around the above cited two central tenements to set goals and standards; and through mutual obligation, cooperate in agreed robust defence areas to identify cognitive contemporary capacity and capability gaps and standards and address them.

The Treaty will only reinforce and strengthen the sovereignty of PNG.

Section 202(b) (international obligations), Section 205 of the National Constitution and PNG Defence Force (International Obligations Act-2010) allows for PNG to engage in mutual defence alliances.

PNG-Australia mutual defence treaty would be the first for PNG and only the second for Australia in 75 years.

ANZUS Treaty, US-Philippines Mutual Defence Treaty and Japan-US Security Treaty are examples of military alliances within our region. Military or defence alliances are provided within international law and also as in collective security under the charter of the United Nations.

In Areas of Defence Cooperation, Section 206 of the National Constitution (Visiting Forces) and the 1977 Status of Forces Act makes allowances to enhance the capability and interoperability with foreign militaries to respond to potential threats.

Immunity during engagement is not a discipline force language and is conjured to stir dissent without basis.

In a world of uncertainly with competing ideologies where human dignity and peaceful coexistence are fast diminishing into partitioned power postures, it is better to have détente measures now then follow in the path of Kuwait.

Mutual Defence does not cede any sovereignty but seeks to reinforce and strengthen the very concept of sovereignty.

The proposed Treaty creates pathways for citizens of either party to enlist into either parties defence forces.

This provision is not for defence personnel integration between the parties. This Treaty upholds and maintains the authorities of the sovereign command of the Chief of Defence Forces of both countries.

Operational integration is provided for, so defence personnel of both countries can be trained on similar platforms and assets essential for interoperability.

Recruitment must not be confused with integration. Recruitment as an employment pathway is pursued in this Treaty and not enlisted uniform personnel integration. The recruitment boundaries of both defence forces will be mutually broaden for new recruitment to cover the territories of both countries. Papua New Guinean school leavers can now apply to join the Australian Defence force and vice versa.

Further, both countries coexist bilaterally, regionally and in a multilateral space and the proposed Treaty does not have exclusivity clauses to sovereign and commercial presence. The principles of universalism in PNG's foundational foreign policy persist with the Marape-Rosso infusion of contemporary strategic partnership for security and prosperity. This foreign policy paradigm of the Marape-Rosso government is cognizant of the Defence White paper and the Pukpuk treaty weaves into the construct of both.

The government in acknowledging maritime capacity gaps has been working with partners to secure PNG's maritime domains through ship rider platforms with France, the United Kingdom, and the United States to secure our waters from illicit activities and protect PNG's fishery resources and interest.

At PNG's 50 years of independence, Japan and PNG entered into a new program called the "Official Security Assistance". At its inception on the 15th September 2025, the Foreign Minister of PNG, the Hon. Justin Tkatchenko signed a K11.6 million program for Japan to fund the PNGDF Engineering Battalion to procure machinery to assist with infrastructure projects.

PNG has defence cooperation programs with Australia, France, United States, Indonesia, New Zealand, Japan and also with China. This Treaty is never done to the exclusion of any country or third-party commercial presence.

My fellow countrymen and women, the Pukpuk treaty has received legal clearance from the State Solicitor of PNG. The Treaty if accepted by parliament, will not require any amendment to any legislation or enactment of new legislation to facilitate its entry into force.

The Treaty is negotiated to maintain and enhance PNG's sovereignty, with PNG's national interest considered paramount. The Treaty also provides a three (3) tiered annual monitoring, implementation and consultation mechanisms with a termination clause requiring only the service of notification.

Let us work together to strengthen and enhance our sovereignty and our human rights and destiny.

Elias Rahuromo Wohengu
Secretary and PNG Lead Negotiator
Pukpuk Treaty

25 September 2025