

## **Removal of WWII Relics in Solomons**

BY JOANNA SIREHETI

### **News on sale of World War II relics in Shortlands and having them removed from their resting places has caused public protest.**

According to One News, government has agreed to the arrangement for the sale of all World War II relics at the community of Balalae in Shortlands to an international group. It was reported that among the group on the island was the Minister for Tourism, Samuel Bentley. The One News report states that two meetings had taken place in Shortlands and an agreement has been signed in approval and support of the move. A One News reporter revealed that prior to the signing of the agreement, an argument took place as two chiefs did not agree with what was about to take place. "However, both had a change of mind and gave way for the signing to proceed," the One News reporter said. The signed agreement gave way for removal of 11 remains of Japanese planes that has been in place since after the World War II. "The relics are said to be too old and not of much value for tourism, so removing them was seen necessary," the One New reporter said. The move has stirred anger among the Balalae community as it is not just the physical removal of relics that has been in place for so many years, but also the removal of history for the people of the province. Speaking on the issue with the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau, a worker who wishes to remain anonymous said removal of the World War II remnants was taking away what belonged to the country. Solomon Times was informed that the relics belonged to the Solomon Islands Government even though it was on lands owned by local tribes. The source said that no one has the right to make agreements and remove the relics except for the Minister of Tourism who has the power over the act. Furthermore, "only one man in Solomon Islands has the license to export such things like relics, and that person is the Advisor to the National Museum." Solomon Times was informed that the National Museum Advisor has the legal rights to remove relics. Asked on how the issue came to light, the source said that a business trip was in place around the same area when removing of relics was in place. "I was there with a group on some tourism-related tour, and we were told not to go to the island as they were expecting the Bomb Disposal Team there. What we saw instead was removal of the war relics and that is how it has

hit the news headlines," the source revealed. "What I am guessing is that the removal of relics was supposed to take place quietly, and this is not good example set especially for villagers. This is a big history loss for the people of the village involved," the source said. Not only has the activity destroyed history for the people of Balalae in Shortlands, but it has done environmental damage on the island. "To remove the relics, they had to cut down trees to be used as rollers to move the planes out of their resting spots," the Solomon Times was informed.

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