



Australian High Commission
Solomon Islands

MEDIA RELEASE

FIRST EXERCISE COASTWATCHERS FOR 2026 IS COMPLETE

8 APRIL 2026

31 March saw the closing ceremony for the first Exercise Coastwatchers of 2026.

The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) partnered together to provide training course to over 100 members of the RSIPF.

This first Exercise Coastwatchers for 2026 included instructor-level courses, developing the skills of RSIPF members to provide training on how to plan and safely lead complex operations at sea.

Speaking at the closing ceremony, Australia's Defence Adviser to the Solomon Islands, Captain Emma Griffiths, said the course qualified three RSIPF members who are now able to run and deliver courses to police officers throughout the country to build the skills in the planning of complex maritime operations.

"This course was not just about teaching small boats skills, but also about how to be an effective trainer and how to best teach skills to RSIPF members," Captain Griffiths said.

"We look forward to more instructors' courses being run in the next Exercise Coastwatchers later this year."

In addition to courses on small boats, Exercise Coastwatchers covered a number of advanced skillsets. These were all in areas requested specifically by the RSIPF and the Solomon Islands Government.

Many RSIPF members undertook a course to become qualified drone pilots. These officers learned to fly the high-spec Parrot drone, which includes both regular and thermal cameras.

The drone is well-suited to assist with search and rescue operations and to respond to natural disasters by helping to assess damage and plan response efforts.

Officers also learned how to use these drones as part of border security operations, to help prevent illegal material like drugs coming across the border.

Some of the drones will be based at the Western Border Outpost, when it opens later this year. Funded by Australia, this outpost will provide space for multiple agencies to work together to keep Solomon Islands safe and secure. Advanced medical training was also provided to RSIPF members, to help ensure they can provide assistance to other police officers and members of the public when they are far from a hospital.

Teams from the RSIPF and ADF also went through vehicle and boat maintenance programs to build skills and knowledge in these practical areas which keep the RSIPF running.

All of these skills were brought together in the Border Surveillance course, where participants tackled a number of challenging problems. This included search and rescue operations at sea, and intercepting and inspecting boats suspected of carrying drugs.

Captain Emma Griffiths said she was excited to hear about how well the training had gone this year.

“Exercise Coastwatchers is focussed on building skills in the RSIPF for their day-to-day operations. But it is not just basic training the RSIPF and ADF are working on: the courses cover advanced skillsets. We then work to bring these courses together to show how we can combine these skills for better outcomes.”

Captain Griffiths noted the training helped to strengthen relationships between the RSIPF and ADF, as visiting ADF members built a genuine understanding of and respect for Solomon Islands and its people.

“I want to thank the RSIPF and Solomon Islands for being excellent hosts,” said Captain Griffiths.

“I know the ADF members who come across for Exercise Coastwatchers love their time here. They learn as much from their Solomon Islander friends as they teach, and also enjoy testing their skills in the Solomon Islands.”

Exercise Coastwatchers is planned to return to the Solomon Islands in September 2026.

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PHOTOS & CAPTIONS



Photo 1: PC Donovan Ramsy receiving the High Achieving Student award for the Advanced Border Surveillance, Navigation, Patrolling and Reconnaissance Course from Acting Commissioner RSIPF Mathias Lenialu, and Australian High Commissioner Jeff Roach.



Photo 2: Vehicle Mechanic David Waokea receiving the High Achieving Student award for the Vehicle Maintainers Course from Acting Commissioner RSIPF Mathias Lenialu, and Australian High Commissioner Jeff Roach.



Photo 3: RSIPF and ADF Members who took part in the Parrot Drone Pilots License course.



Photo 4: RSIPF and ADF Participants of the Logistics Course



Photo 5: Acting RSIPF Commissioner Mathias Lenialu speaking during the closing ceremony of Exercise Coastwatchers



Photo 6: Defence Adviser Captain Emma Griffiths speaking during the closing ceremony of Exercise Coastwatchers.