

Solomon Islands coup attempt triggered by US-backed, anti-China forces

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Anti-Chinese political forces supported by the US in the Solomon Islands violently mobilised against the elected national government in an apparent coup plot on Wednesday and yesterday.

Arsonists set alight at least 14 buildings in the capital, Honiara, including a hut adjacent to the national parliament, as well as a senior high school, police station, and multiple businesses owned by ethnic Chinese residents. Riot police reportedly blocked the rioters from entering the parliament by deploying tear gas.

The Solomons' government on Wednesday afternoon declared a 36-hour state of emergency, though further arson attacks were reported yesterday.

The Australian government has immediately seized on the unrest, dispatching 23 members of the heavily armed and riot-trained "Specialist Response Group" of the Australian Federal Police, as well as 93 members of the military. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison declared that the force would be in the Solomons only for "weeks." This deployment may however only be the initial response, with the situation recalling the lead up to the launch of the neo-colonial Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) that dominated the country between 2003 and 2017.

The apparent effort to forcibly overthrow Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare is the direct outcome of two years of US-fuelled provocations against the elected government after the country switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China in September 2019.

Approximately 1,000 rioters mobilised in Honiara, largely comprising a group that travelled from the island province of Malaita as members of the separatist "Malaita 4 Democracy" outfit. Solomons' police reportedly blocked the berthing of another ship from

Malaita, preventing additional coup plotters from mobilising.

Just over a year ago, the same anti-government forces issued a pogromist threat to all ethnic Chinese residents of Malaita to flee within 24 hours. The provincial Malaitan government also then threatened to block any activity of Chinese-owned corporations within the province.

The anti-Chinese forces arrived in the capital on Wednesday waving Malaitan flags as well as one prominent national flag of Israel. The odd sight of the Zionist state's banner being waved within an anti-government riot in an impoverished South Pacific state is explicable only within the context of the US-Australian drive to destabilise the Sogavare government as a means of countering Beijing's influence in the South Pacific.

Ever since the Solomons' diplomatic turn away from Taiwan, Washington has promoted fundamentalist evangelical and pro-Zionist Christian and anti-communist layers in the country.

In September 2019, Republican Senator Marco Rubio threatened to crash the Solomons' economy by cutting off access to global financial markets. This came just after a team of American foreign policy, trade, and military officials had visited Malaita and the province's premier, Daniel Suidani. The provincial leader subsequently declared that he did not accept the country's recognition of Beijing and would instead maintain an independent foreign policy with Taiwan. He added that he had asked both the US and Australia to contribute to "Malaita security."

In October 2020, Washington pledged \$US25 million in so-called aid to Malaita. This donation—500 times more aid than the province receives from all other countries put together—amounted to a cash reward for

the provincial administration's attempted sabotage of the national government's foreign policy.

Suidani's stance on Taiwan was accompanied by a provocative declaration that he would accelerate moves to declare Malaita an independent state, separate from Solomon Islands. This raised the spectre of a return of the civil war conditions that wracked the country from 1998–2003.

There has been a seamless transition from the Trump to the Biden administrations with regard to Washington's anti-China drive in the South Pacific.

In response to the violence and destruction in Honiara in the last two days, regional and Australian media outlets have expressed surprise and shock over what has happened.

Yet nothing in what has developed was unanticipated—the *World Socialist Web Site* warned in September last year: “The Malaitan administration's reckless actions threaten a civil war within the impoverished South Pacific country. Between 1999 and 2003, a low-intensity civil war that involved the separatist Malaita Eagle Force militia cost around 200 lives and forced tens of thousands of people to flee their homes. The threat of renewed conflict has been deliberately stoked by the United States, as part of its aggressive drive to undermine China's influence in the Pacific.”

Sogavare told ABC News today that the latest unrest was “influenced and encouraged by other powers... countries that don't want ties with the People's Republic of China.” He added: “I don't want to name names, we'll leave it there, we know who they are.”

Malaitan premier Daniel Suidani has prominently refused to condemn the violent riots over the last two days, instead insisting that Sogavare has to resign. National opposition leader Matthew Wale has issued similar statements.

Members of the national government from Malaita province issued a public statement denouncing the opposition for being “instigators of strife, violence, anarchy.”

Tensions have been escalating since Suidani spent five months last year in Taiwan undergoing brain surgery and receiving subsequent treatment. The Malaitan premier promoted this medical treatment as evidence of Taiwan's political support for the Solomons. While recuperating, Suidani made time to

speak with Australia's “Sky News” Sharri Markson, who has prominently fuelled the Wuhan lab conspiracy theory over the origins of COVID-19. In between appearances on former Donald Trump advisor Steve Bannon's podcast, Markson falsely presented Suidani as a heroic anti-corruption fighter for “democracy” in the South Pacific.

When Suidani returned to the Solomon Islands last July, there were rumours that he alternatively would be arrested or removed in a no confidence motion through the regional parliament in Malaita. Unconfirmed rumours published at the time in the *Solomon Star* newspaper also hinted that pro-Suidani militia forces were preparing to forcibly overthrow the national government.



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