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‘They Will Terminate at District Headquarters’: Towards a History of Patrol Reports and Their Circulation in Papua New Guinea c. 1958–73

MICHAEL WOOD 

ABSTRACT

The patrol report is an important source of data concerning the history of colonialism in PNG. However, the patrol report as a specific set of documents with their own history has not itself been subject to analysis. The textual analysis outlined in this article is one approach to developing such a history. The article highlights the importance of official instructions on how a patrol report should be written and circulated within the bureaucracy. There were persistent attempts to regulate and reduce the flow of political and social issues into the centre of the state. These attempts were difficult to stabilize as they involved both the devaluation and revaluation of different types of knowledge found in patrol reports from the late 1950s to the early 1970s. What emerges from this analysis is a history that explores bureaucratic attempts to define and organize the way knowledge is reported and circulated rather than a history based on the content of those reports.

Keywords: Papua New Guinea, pre-independence, patrol reports, production of knowledge

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The work undertaken by patrol officers in Papua New Guinea (PNG) provides important insights into the analysis of colonialism, its multiple legacies, and PNG's overall post-European history.¹ The patrol, and its representation in official patrol reports and other documents, has long been positioned as providing key indications of the potential civilizing value and justification of Australian colonialism in PNG.² This research has suggested that the activities and travel of the patrol officers and other officials gave shape to post-colonial PNG's centres of government and its periphery.³ In this article I emphasize how rules and practices regulating the circulation of patrol officers' travel-related knowledge are also important to our understanding of the formation of PNG's pre-independence bureaucracy and images of national unity.⁴

Analysis of patrol reports has largely been confined to issues of content rather than the report's various forms. Some accounts tend to assume a patrol report's content is defined by, and conforms to, the conventions of epistemological realism and, as a result, its content is not significantly structured by a poetics or politics of knowledge. In contrast to such assumptions, I argue that the documents patrol officers produced were not stable, self-evident entities and that they require their own history. Like all documents, patrol reports are best understood as entities with ongoing relational histories with other documents, people, and things. A patrol report was never defined by a set of invariant features that provided an internally consistent system of sub-components. Rather, patrol reports were continually redefined in terms of function and by shifting formal instructions and practices that generated

¹ This article is part of a project developed with Simon Foale and Rosita Henry on the memories of patrol officers' contributions to preparing PNG for independence in the period roughly between 1960 and 1975. All material in this article is based on publicly available sources and on discussions via the internet involving ex-patrol officers. Henry and Wood also talked to several ex-patrol officers in Cairns. James Cook University allocated this project Ethics Approval (H9183) in August 2023.

² Significant contributions to the analysis of patrols officers and their patrol reports have been made by James Sinclair, *Kiap: Australia's Patrol Officers in Papua New Guinea* (Sydney: Pacific Publications, 1981); James Sinclair, *Middle Kingdom: A Colonial History of the Highlands of Papua New Guinea* (Adelaide: Crawford Publishing House, 2016); Edward Schieffelin and Robert Crittenden, *Like People You See in a Dream: First Contact in Six Papuan Societies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Bill Gammage, *The Sky Travellers: Journey in New Guinea 1938–1939* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, Melbourne University Press, 1998).

³ For recent work using patrol reports to understand PNG's history see Brad Underhill, *Preparing a Nation? The New Deal in the Villages of Papua New Guinea* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2024); Peter Dwyer and Monica Minnegal, 'On Reading Patrol Reports – 3: Burnett River People', *Journal of Pacific History* (henceforth *JPH*) 55, no. 4 (2020): 520–33.

⁴ This reiterates Anderson's argument that it was the travel of pilgrims, state officials, and their documents that defined a sense of unity between otherwise unrelated localities. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 53–7. See also Anna Tsing's *Reworking of Anderson: In the Realm of the Diamond Queen. Marginality in an Out-of-the-Way Place* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 123–6.

complex internal and external inter-textual relationships.⁵ Patrol reports were enmeshed in textual politics concerning how they produced and circulated different kinds of knowledge within the bureaucracy that employed the patrol officers. Since any reorganization of knowledge production always involves an active reorganization of ignorance, the following outline of some colonial controversies about knowledge production needs to be supplemented with a history of the bureaucracy's production of illegibility, restricted knowledge, and other forms of ignorance.⁶

No detailed history exists of the changing form and structure of patrol reports in PNG. There has been a tendency to assume the patrol report was an unchanging document, or that any changes to the document were not a significant influence on the report's content. The patrol report as a document was, in this way, separated from the history of its own making. This article responds to this problem by building on the prior work of Ann Laura Stoler, Matthew S. Hull, and others, who outlined how the material and formal properties of state documents played an influential role in generating forms of colonial knowledge, bureaucratic power, and certain social relationships.⁷ It analyses the material and semiotic qualities of the actual patrol reports, such as the visual layout and explicit instructions, to create a document-specific history of colonial knowledge production.⁸ The components of a full patrol report had a required order of appearance and each component part had instructions on how

⁵ Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman, 'Genre, Intertextuality and Social Power', *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (1992): 131–72, 163. Anderson's emphasis on the emergence of a language of state power partially relies on what he calls 'documentary interchangeability' (Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 56), a concept that may well overlap with the idea of inter-textual relations. An emphasis on inter-textual relations highlights how any text, like a patrol report or situation report, can involve a 'mosaic of quotations' from other texts and the 'absorption and transformation' of other texts. Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 37.

⁶ See Jutta Bakonyi, 'Seeing Like Bureaucracies: Rearranging Knowledge and Ignorance in Somalia', *International Political Sociology* 12, no. 3 (2018): 256–73; Andrew Mathews, 'State Making, Knowledge, and Ignorance: Translation and Concealment in Mexican Forestry Institutions', *American Anthropologist* 110, no. 4 (2008): 484–94.

⁷ E.g. see Matthew S. Hull, *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); idem, 'Documents and Bureaucracy', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41, no. 1 (2012): 251–67; Annalise Riles, ed., *Documents: Artefacts of Modern Knowledge* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 181–205; Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Bronwen Douglas, 'Encounters with the Enemy? Academic Readings of Missionary Narratives on Melanesians', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 70, no. 2 (2001): 37–64.

⁸ Along with a focus on instructions the article analyses what Genette calls paratext. Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. J.A. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Paratext is a broader concept than directives as it is concerned with what surrounds, supports, and organizes any text, such as its title and sub-titles, the author's name, an illustrative picture, or map. Paratext helps determine what kind of document is being presented. There can be no official patrol report without appropriate paratextual support that defines how a patrol report should look and, given the purpose of the patrol, what were the appropriate component parts of the report.

to fill them out and how they should circulate through the state bureaucracy. The often-elaborate rules and directions that regulated the appearance and the types of knowledge in a patrol report helped ensure that the resulting text was an official patrol report authorized and legitimated by the state. The implication was that any properly presented patrol report was a true account of activities undertaken by state officials when on patrol.⁹

Patrol officers were part of a relatively autonomous hierarchical bureaucracy and were often competitive regarding status and position. Local knowledge and ethnographic insight into customs were important parts of the currency of the field-based patrol officer. Reputation, status, and the possibilities of promotion partly depended on a patrol officer's capacity to run a successful patrol and write an insightful report on the knowledge and events generated by the patrol.¹⁰ While ethnographic and local knowledge were often important to field staff, their self-definition, and the politics of promotion, my account emphasizes a different kind of politics of knowledge. From the late 1950s, the bureaucratic organization of the production and circulation of knowledge involved a tendency to imagine the nation-state-to-be as made up of situations or events that could be sorted into those relevant to a bureaucratic elite located in headquarters and those relevant to regional field staff. This involved senior staff imagining a national political order that could be actively divided into central and peripheral forms of knowledge production concerning different types of events. At issue was a need to contain some political and social issues and disputes to the local or regional level and provide the administrative headquarters with a certain autonomy from the national periphery. This article outlines how colonial knowledge practices helped create distinct bureaucratic spaces with uneven powers in a soon-to-be-made independent PNG.¹¹

The politics of nation-building as outlined in this article was not just about conflict but the containment of certain issues to specific areas or levels that were created by bureaucrats.¹² This required patrol officers to assess the scale of events and organize the appropriate distribution of knowledge (and ignorance) about such events.¹³ One result was an increased concern with events and situations in any patrol officer's

⁹ The central agent in creating a patrol report's specific form was not the patrol officer who wrote the report but a wide set of headquarters-based officials, including the director of the patrol officer's department.

¹⁰ This is to evoke the idea of an ethnographic state where local knowledge was highly valued. George Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting: Precolonial Ethnography and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 2007).

¹¹ This rephrases Thomas cited in Tania Li, 'Beyond "the State" and Failed Schemes', *American Anthropologist* 107 (2005): 383–94.

¹² This definition of politics derives from Andrew Barry, 'The Anti-Political Economy', *Economy and Society* 31, no. 2 (2002): 268–84, 269–70.

¹³ For more on scale see Linsey McGoey, 'The Logic of Strategic Ignorance', *The British Journal of Sociology* 63, no. 3 (2012): 533–76, 571.

daily work since determining whether an event was of peripheral or central significance often involved choosing which form to use when writing reports.¹⁴

As outlined below patrol reports were always scrutinized by superior staff who wrote critical reviews of all patrol reports. Senior staff also wrote many of the directives concerning report writing and these directives were frequently re-assessed and altered. Any stability in knowledge production was often short-lived. Moreover, changes to requirements sometimes lacked clarity about what new types of knowledge needed to be created.¹⁵ The changes outlined here mainly involve the patrol report's component parts – especially the memorandum of patrol and situation report. The memorandum emerged in 1958 and was a precursor of the situation report, which replaced it in the late 1960s. The situation report was given a salience that made such reports more valuable to central headquarters than an ordinary patrol report.¹⁶ Such changes were part of an uneven process of devaluation and, at times, revaluation of patrol reports in pre-independence PNG. I argue these changes tended to reduce the status of the patrol report by actively marginalizing its relevance to headquarters.

Overall, the aim of the article is to outline some of the history of the documents involved in patrol reporting and to show how these documents helped to define a social ontology of events and situations linked to a national bureaucratic order. This opens up an area of colonial knowledge production that is perhaps usefully different from pre-existing accounts of patrol officers and their roles in a colony preparing for formal independence. While not separate from already-established modes of analysis it is a type of analysis that is focused on the actual construction and documentation of types of colonial knowledge, history, and bureaucratic space. The article concludes by reiterating the need to treat the documents making up patrol reports as historical subjects and suggests some post-independence transformations of report writing.

FROM PATROL REPORT TO MEMORANDUM OF PATROL

The pre-independence patrol report was significantly defined by the imaginative power of the classical exploratory patrol located primarily in the pre-Second World War era and its pre-colonial people and spaces. This 'contact' patrol was, in its most dramatic form, a movement into an unknown and uncontrolled zone existing beyond formal colonial law and 'civilization'. The report deriving from such a patrol was about never-to-be-repeated events such as first contact. The patrol also involved the enactment of the patrol officer's full range of sovereign powers, capacities, and

¹⁴ It was probably Don Handelman who first emphasized the importance of analysing the bureaucratic classification of events in his *Nationalism and the Israeli State: Bureaucratic Logic in Public Events* (New York: Berg, 2004).

¹⁵ This is a point made by Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 39.

¹⁶ As outlined below this value of situation reports also relied on inter-textual relationships with the different components that could make up a patrol report.

character as judge, governor, and policeman.¹⁷ This blurring of executive, legislative, and judicial powers was an integral feature of a patrol officer's self-definition and everyday role, and it was essential to the colonial state's techniques of governance. The patrol officer was effectively a travelling sovereign, unifying and fracturing worlds as he moved.¹⁸ Such patrols sometimes took place in regions that were formally designated as restricted areas. While rapidly diminishing in the 1950s, these restricted areas persisted into the 1960s as places where the Supreme Court of PNG had no jurisdiction until the patrol officers decided it was sufficiently ordered enough to be considered part of the existing formal legal state.

The production of patrol reports in the classical era assumed that even if the state and its law had variable applications in PNG, there were things such as 'society' and 'culture' that created order beyond the state. These entities could be represented as a series of facts and it was important to the appearance of good administration to have accurate knowledge of these facts.¹⁹ The anthropology of the time tended to imagine that any Indigenous society was, prior to colonialism, a functionally integrated coherent whole, more or less stable, that sustained itself through its customs and culture in an orderly way.²⁰ Reflecting some of these ideas, a 1937 printed cover sheet for a patrol report in Papua had the following instructions:

3 In the body of the report the name of the village should be followed by the name of the V.C. [Village Constable]. The number of the houses and the population, as nearly as possible, should be stated. The customs of the natives should as much as possible be noted and reported.

4 The space below is not to be written in.

5 The cost of the patrol must be shown on the back, in the space provided.²¹

The request for patrol reports to document customs may have rested on the assumption that investigating 'customs' could provide the relevant local knowledge

¹⁷ James Sinclair, 'Patrolling in the Restricted Areas of Papua and New Guinea', *Journal of the Australian Institute of International Affairs* 8, no. 3 (1954): 130–45. For an outline of 'uncontrolled areas' in pre-Second World War PNG and their legal foundations see Edward Wolfers, *Race Relation and Colonial Rule in Papua New Guinea* (Sydney: Australia and New Zealand Book Company, 1976), 96.

¹⁸ This derives from Sahlins's discussion of the stranger king. In Sahlins's terms this article outlines how the patrol officer was a myth before he and his reports became an event. Marshal Sahlins, 'The Stranger-King: Or Dumézil among the Fijians', *JPH* 16, no. 3 (1981): 107–32, 107. Also see Richard Scaglion, 'Kiaps as Kings: Abelam Legal Change in Historical Perspective', in *History and Ethnohistory in Papua New Guinea*, ed. D. Gewertz and E. Schieffelin (Sydney: University of Sydney, 1985), 77–99.

¹⁹ Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 123–4.

²⁰ Ian C. Campbell, 'Anthropology and the Professionalism of Colonial Administration in Papua and New Guinea', *JPH* 33, no.1 (1998): 69–90.

²¹ M.J. Healey, Kauru Patrol Report no. 6 of 1936/37, 12–16 January 1937, National Archives and Public Records Services of Papua New Guinea (henceforth National Archives of PNG), Patrol Reports, Gulf District, Kerema Station, 1936–37, vol. 15, https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb63498273/_1.pdf. All URL links in this article were live at the time of publication.

for appropriate policymaking in a colonial state. There were also other indications of the value of anthropology. In 1937, the resident magistrate at Kerema in the Gulf District wrote a series of memos to Patrol Officer Timperley, which outlined advice on what Timperley should be doing. Part of the resident magistrate's advice was about the weather and anthropology: 'By the way, whenever a day happens to be very wet, do not expect to do any taxing or censusing work. The natives only become miserable in the wet. Take time off and study anthropology'.²² The magistrate also advised dealing with subjects that might consume too much time by burying such issues in a file. While the advice seems so saturated with irony that it could be a joke rather than an actionable directive, it outlines how a government official might reduce urgency associated with an excessive, even wasteful, consumption of time by displacing the issue to a file, lest this issue redefine the already existing priorities of 'more important issues'. The magistrate's reassertion of the existing temporal ordering of priority issues involved a somewhat paradoxically self-contradictory reference, and non-reference, to the Cupola Road issue and its successful containment in an official file rather than in a memo:²³

You will notice that I am not referring to Cupola Road work in this memo. Whenever a subject like that begins to take form it should become a file, for reference. I would only say this: don't waste too much time over it on your way back as there are many more important matters to be pushed along, and time is the essence of the contract.²⁴

This brief account suggests that the organization and storage of official correspondence and the co-ordination of its relationships to patrols and patrol reports was an important technical issue and complexly linked to the political organization of time. The issue of how to relate correspondence to patrol reports is made even more evident in the way various memos by the resident magistrate to Timperley are stored in digital archives.²⁵ They literally follow Timperley's patrol report without any direct specification of how the two sets of documents were linked.

Co-ordinating correspondence with patrol reports and co-ordinating the sub-components of any report were persisting problems that were often addressed in the post-Second World War era. One response by the then-new, unified administration of PNG was to improve the clarity of the instructions concerning the

²² Resident Magistrate, Memo to Mr P.O. Timperley, 17 September 1937, National Archives of PNG, Patrol Reports Gulf District, Kerema Station, vol. 16, <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb56672272>.

²³ I do not know what actual issues were attached to Cupola Road. I am drawn to the magistrate's self-parody in referring to how he is not referring to these issues when he clearly is referring to them. Parody and paradox are pervasive features of writing about bureaucratic officials – Gilbert and Sullivan, Kafka, Orwell, and Graeber being among the most influential.

²⁴ Resident Magistrate, Memo to Mr P.O. Timperley, 17 September 1937.

²⁵ The reference here is to the digital archives of patrol reports in the University of California San Diego.

production of patrol reports. This clarification involved circular instructions, which were a series of memos from headquarters containing policy statements and updates on how patrol officers were to undertake their various tasks. These instructions were routinely sent to all patrol officers in PNG from departmental headquarters in Port Moresby and came to number several hundred. Standing instructions were published as booklets in 1962 and 1970. They outlined how patrol officers should perform their duties but differed from circular instructions in that they were expected to persist and remain active for a long period of time. Circular instruction became the domain of updates and revisions.²⁶ Another important source of information about writing a patrol report was the comments and criticisms from superiors about any submitted report. Such comments could come from the Port Moresby-based director of the entire department, the district officer, or their assistants in district headquarters. These comments played a crucial role in defining what was considered an appropriate patrol report and in reproducing the status hierarchy of the department.²⁷

Another spatial feature of the patrol report involved the transformation of PNG's internal morphology after the Second World War. By 1954, long exploratory patrol into restricted areas was no longer needed.²⁸ Regions of PNG where the colonial state barely existed were rapidly diminishing, as was the idea that custom provided the basis for social and political order. Instead, social and political conflict and order were to be primarily organized by a deracialized and unified independent nation-state. While reports of the 1930s could be written as if they were independent of the demands for decolonization, patrol reports of the 1950s and 1960s were suffused with the possibilities of both decolonization and the development of an independent PNG.

Nonetheless, there were a series of zones with different restrictions on access that persisted up until the 1960s. Until the withdrawal of these restrictions, the independent PNG state-to-be was not fully unified. Detailed classifications of the political landscape of PNG were linked to precise specifications of who could patrol in different areas.²⁹ In areas 'under control' a cadet patrol officer (CPO) could accompany a patrol officer (PO) at any time and could patrol 'solo' in this area after one year's service. A PO could patrol solo in such an area at any time. In 'areas of influence', a CPO could accompany a PO after six months of service as a cadet, and a PO could undertake a solo patrol at any time. In areas under partial influence, a CPO with six months' experience could accompany a PO who had one year's experience. In areas recently 'penetrated' by a patrol, 'a CPO with one year's service as a cadet

²⁶ Currently I mainly know circular instructions from quotations in patrol reports. In this article, I have relied largely on the two booklets of standing instructions and front jackets of patrol reports for instructions on how to write patrol reports.

²⁷ Comments by such persons may in fact have been written by their delegated agents. Departmental directors were, in some contexts, probably a composite person.

²⁸ Sinclair, 'Patrolling in the Restricted Areas', 145.

²⁹ Territory of Papua and New Guinea, *Department of Native Affairs, Departmental Standing Instructions General Field Administration*, vol. 1 (Port Moresby, 1962), 11–13.

could accompany a PO who had two years of experience in that position'.³⁰ Reflecting the idea that only patrolling in restricted areas could generate the *ur*-form of classical patrol report, suitably qualified patrol officers were expected to write a full patrol report 'if the Patrol was conducted in a Restricted or markedly under-developed area'³¹ or if they had been directed to so by a superior officer.

By the late 1950s, the earlier interest in recording ethnography and custom was in decline in the patrol report's front cover and other paratexts. In the front covers of post-Second World War patrol reports, there was no mention of 'custom'. Topics covered in reports were organized by sub-headings such as native affairs, native agriculture and livestock, education, roads and bridges, villages, war damage compensation, taxation, and missions. There was a sub-heading for anthropology, explained in the following terms:

Record any factual anthropological data which can reasonably be regarded as interesting and not already well known. Collect specimens, if worthwhile items are available. List these in an Appendix to the Report. Informative details concerning each specimen should be attached to the specimen itself and both Forwarded to Departmental Headquarters ... All objects concerning any phase of people's life are valuable and interest is not confined to spectacular or artistically pleasing specimens.³²

The emphasis on artefact collecting was to create 'specimens' for the new national museum in Port Moresby.³³ However, in patrol reports I have seen where the sub-heading 'Anthropology' was used, the reporting patrol officer often left the section blank or wrote 'Nil'. Anthropology as artefact collecting differed from the front cover calls in 1938 for patrol officers to record native customs.

³⁰ Ibid., 11–12. Above the patrol officers mentioned in this text were district officers who ran the district office and assistant district officers who ran the office in sub-districts. They all reported to the director of the Department of Native Affairs based in Port Moresby. District officer and assistant district officer were in the 1950s magistrates, coroners, senior police officers, and goalers. Patrol officers mainly patrolled. District commissioners were responsible for the co-ordination of all public servants, not just patrol officers in any district and were the most powerful bureaucrat in that district. All these officials were initially members of the Department of Native Affairs but in mid-1955 district commissioners were moved into the Department of the Administrator – the administrator was the senior bureaucrat in the whole in colony. In 1964 all patrol officers, assistant district officers, and district officers became part of the Department of District Administration (DDA) and lost their magisterial power. In July 1969 the DDA was absorbed into the Department of the Administrator, which later became the Department of Chief Minister and Development Administration (DCMDA).

³¹ Territory of Papua and New Guinea, *Standing Instructions* 1962, 18–19.

³² Territory of Papua and New Guinea, *Standing Instructions*, 1962, 59.

³³ In 1953 patrol officers were explicitly instructed to collect ethnographic artefacts for the museum. Robert L. Welsch, 'The Transformation of Cultural Centres in Papua New Guinea', in *The Future of Indigenous Museums: Perspectives from the Southwest Pacific*, ed. Nick Stanley (Oxford: Bergahn Books, 2008), 210.

TOWARDS THE SINGLE EVENT MEMORANDUM OF PATROL

In 1958, Keith McCarthy, then-director of the Department of Native Affairs,³⁴ redefined the writing of a full patrol report as a task for junior and new staff, thereby reinforcing status distinctions between staff. The more experienced staff only needed to fill out what was called a memorandum of patrol.³⁵ The introduction of the memorandum as a replacement for a full patrol report marked a crucial turning point in the creation of rational ignorance within the department’s production of knowledge. Writing a full patrol report was transformed into a training device that enabled superior staff to critically evaluate the abilities of junior officers.³⁶

Instructions issued in the 1962 standing orders reiterated this shift:

all field officers were required to maintain a Field Officers Journal, a printed diary; but District Officers, Assistant District Officers and PO2s now only had to fill in a printed form, the Memorandum of Patrol, instead of typing a Patrol Report. Assistant Patrol Officers, Cadets, and Patrol Officers Grade 1 were still required to submit Patrol Reports.³⁷

Similar instructions had been circulated four years earlier. In 1960, McCarthy responded to Cadet PO Byrnes’s patrol report by asking the district officer of Central District to ‘Please instruct Mr Byrnes to read Circular Instruction No. 267 of the 24th March, 1958 and to conform to the provisions set out therein when submitting future reports’.³⁸ This circular had announced the need for junior patrol officers to write full patrol reports as part of their training, something McCarthy emphasized when criticizing another ‘hardly ... satisfactory report’ written by Byrnes that contained:

only 1 ½ pages of Patrol Diary, covering 24 days, and one page of narrative report. Your attention is drawn to Circular Instruction No 267 of the 24th March 1958, paragraph 9(a) which states, inter alia, that submission of the narrative type of Patrol Report by

³⁴ The department later changed its name to the Department of District Administration.

³⁵ The earliest printed version of the cover sheet for a memorandum of patrol I have seen is dated November 1958.

³⁶ The training of PNG patrol officers commenced in 1961 at the Finschhafen Native Affairs Training Centre. Sinclair, *Kiap*, 197. As future replacements for the Europeans, the PNG cadets also enacted a potential, if still partial, sovereignty that might be fully realized in an independent nation-state.

³⁷ This derives from Bill Brown’s summary of the 1962 Standing Instructions. PO2s was a reference to Patrol Officers Grade 2 who were more experienced patrol officers than their subordinates Patrol Officers Grade 1. See Bill Brown, <https://exkiap.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=1427>.

³⁸ Barrie C. Byrnes, Abau Patrol Report no. 1 of 1960/61, 1–28 July, National Archives of PNG, Central District, Abau Station, 1960–61, vol. 17, https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb87047691/_1.pdf.

Cadet Patrol Officers assists this Headquarters to assess their administrative ability, capacity for accurate recording, powers of observation and trends of thought.³⁹

Failure to respond appropriately and in a timely fashion to a circular instruction could result in requests for reports to be re-written. In August 1960, an assistant district officer from Abau Station wrote to a district officer based in Port Moresby to explain that when:

compiling his report Mr Milne had not yet seen Circular Instruction No 315 of 27th June, 1960. I am, therefore instructing Mr Milne to comply with this new Circular Instruction and re-submit the statistical information required ... In the presentation of his election results Mr Milne has complied with the provisions of your memo 14-25-1/1326 of 29th March, 1960 which was the latest information to hand when he prepared his report.⁴⁰

These comments foreground some of the complexity of writing appropriate reports. There were not just instructions on the form (if it was printed) but also in circular instructions, memos, and standing instructions published as booklets in 1962 and 1970 that outlined how patrol officers should perform their duties, including how they should write patrol reports. Directions concerning the memorandum of patrol, outlined in circular instructions, were restated in the 1962 Standing Instructions. Memoranda of patrol were still being sent to the director of the Department of District Administration in Port Moresby until at least May 1968.⁴¹ Basically, from 1958 until 1968, writing a full patrol report was more about the production of a new patrol officer than the production of knowledge vital to the colonial state.

Where patrols were only of local concern, senior field staff could fill out the memorandum, which had a one-page printed cover sheet where staff could indicate the patrol number, the officer carrying out the patrol, the purpose of the patrol, and the dates covered by the patrol. A full diary could be attached to the cover jacket. In the printed cover jacket of the memorandum of patrol, half a page was allocated to providing a 'Summary of Correspondence Arising from Patrol'. A common response

³⁹ Barrie C. Byrnes, Abau Patrol Report no. 5 of 1960/61, 2–24 September, National Archives of PNG, Central District, Abau Station, 1960–61, vol. 17, https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb87047691/_1.pdf.

⁴⁰ Herbert Clark (Assistant District Officer, Abau), Letter to District Officer, Central District, Port Moresby concerning H.G de Milne Memorandum of Patrol, Magarida (Mag) no. 1 of 1960/61, 17 August 1960, National Archives of PNG, Central District, Magarida Station, 1960–61; Patrol Reports, Central District, Abau Station, 1960–61, vol. 17, https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb87047691/_1.pdf.

⁴¹ L.F. Nolan, Memorandum of Patrol, Woitape Patrol no. 11 of 1967/68, 11–14 March 1968, National Archives of PNG, Central District, Goilala Subdistrict, Woitape Station, 1967–68, vol. 6, https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb0001633w/_1.pdf.

was to write, ‘Nil correspondence. All matters dealt with in routine correspondence’, although some enthusiasts did list some of the letters they had written.

The patrolling officer signed this document, and then a senior local officer, such as a district officer, signed off. These signatures effectively endorsed the following statement: ‘I certify that all necessary administrative action has been or is being taken on matters arising out of this patrol and that the correspondence indicated above by a “tick” has been forwarded to the headquarters, Department of Native Affairs, Port Moresby’. As to what correspondence should be forwarded, the 1962 standing instructions indicated that the district officer’s ‘common sense’ could be relied on:

The District Officer must make a commonsense decision as to what correspondence he should forward to Departmental headquarters or to other Departments and, in such cases, he should himself make some comment – it is NOT sufficient for a District Officer to do no more than move the Correspondence on, for the recipient will almost certainly wish to know what the district Officer of the District thinks of the matter.⁴²

The changes regarding who needed to write a patrol report or a memorandum and what correspondence should be forwarded to headquarters can be understood partly as a repudiation of unnecessary form filling. They involved an apparent shift towards greater efficiency and were intended to enable more ‘administrative action’. These reforms also weakened the assumption that patrol reports were significant bearers of the legal truth of state decisions by highlighting how such actions could also be represented in letters.⁴³ These letters did not even require copying into a memorandum if the issues could be dealt with at a local level. The changes deliberately increased headquarters’ ignorance of some local issues, which in turn provided headquarters with an enhanced ability to avoid political liability for these issues.

This was further addressed in the 1962 Standing Order’s discussion of a subject-specific or single-event memorandum. The district officer could create this document if they thought material in any patrol report warranted:

some particular action on the part of Departmental Headquarters, [in which case] he is to forward an appropriate extract from the report, under cover of a separate memorandum, dealing with that subject only. Each such extract dealing with a particular matter is to be the subject of a separate memorandum. The responsibility for local administration matters and problems must be shouldered by District Officers and Assistant District Officers and they should

⁴² Territory of Papua and New Guinea, *Standing Instructions*, 1962, 21.

⁴³ Phrasing here derives from Hull, *Government of Paper*, 246. The only way the state knows what it has done is by creating an accurate record of all events that involved its officials.

refer to departmental Headquarters only those matters in respect of which wisdom and prudence point to the need to seek Headquarter advice, guidance and possibly intervention.⁴⁴

The issues that could be the subject of a single-topic memorandum to be forwarded to headquarters 'for some particular action' were not specified. However, they would, in the above standing instruction, apparently emerge from the field officer's character – specifically his 'wisdom and prudence'. I take these character traits as foundational to the shared rationality of an imagined bureaucratic 'common sense' concerning what were local administration matters. Given their commonsense, district and assistant district officers apparently knew the boundary between their knowledge of certain issues and their ignorance of other issues and lack of ability to deal with them.⁴⁵

Such common sense operated in conjunction with the memorandum's directives to define the emerging nation-state as essentially made up of a series of unique events that either could be confined to the periphery or redefined as nationally significant. Such classificatory work involved a new understanding of the history of patrol officers, their patrols and reports, and the future of PNG.⁴⁶ Patrol officer knowledge production in the 1960s was no longer defined by a travelling sovereign but by the nature of single events or situations and by patrols for a specific task such as a census or an election. The politics of the memorandum of patrol significantly redefined and reasserted the powers of state officials rather than the powers of the future citizens of a democratic PNG.⁴⁷ The attempts to reform and regulate what types of knowledge were produced by patrol officers created a model of the emerging nation-state's politics in ways that fundamentally maintained, for a time, certain autonomous powers of the departmental leadership.

WHAT IS IN A NAME? SECRET SITUATIONS IN 1960s PNG

In 1967, Tom Ellis replaced Keith McCarthy as director of the Department of District Affairs (DDA).⁴⁸ Ellis abolished the memorandum of patrol and demanded that all patrol officers write a patrol report, irrespective of seniority – although not all these

⁴⁴ Territory of Papua and New Guinea, *Standing Instructions*, 1962, 27–8. My addition in square brackets. Underlining in the original.

⁴⁵ This point derives from McGoey, 'The Logic of Strategic Ignorance', 555.

⁴⁶ Donna Haraway in 'A Cyborg Manifesto' suggests that all classifications involve a unique understanding of history. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149–81.

⁴⁷ Colonial (and post-colonial) governments also expected that elected representatives would articulate regional political issues via new political institutions of local councils, provincial governments, and national parliament. Patrol officers were crucially involved in creating these institutions.

⁴⁸ In July 1969, the DDA was merged with the Department of Administration, and Ellis became the secretary of that department. See Sinclair, *Middle Kingdom*, 331; idem, *Kiap*, 264–5. Ellis remained in the position of secretary until June 1973.

reports had to be forwarded to headquarters. Writing reports was no longer simply a matter of training new staff. It was once again fundamental to being a patrol officer. Ellis replaced the memorandum with a situation report that field staff started using in the second half of 1968.

Naming the new report a situation report may reflect Ellis's interest in boosting the value of the knowledge generated by patrol officers. The name evoked links with the secret situation reports produced in the Second World War by the military, by the CIA from 1947 to 1951,⁴⁹ and by patrol officers in 1960s Bougainville.⁵⁰ During the Second World War, Ellis served as an air force pilot, and it seems reasonable to assume he became familiar with situation reports used by allied defence and security services (also known as sitreps).⁵¹ Classified as secret, these reports outlined available data on the position and number of enemy forces, casualties, and damage to infrastructure. They were brief – usually no longer than a page and were produced on a regular, sometimes daily, basis.⁵²

The name situation report may not simply reflect the military background of Ellis and many other patrol officers recruited in the 1940s and 1950s. It may also reflect a more widespread interest in security issues concerning PNG in the 1960s that emerged from Indonesia and internal political conflict, especially in Bougainville and East New Britain. The Indonesian take-over of West Papua resulted in the

⁴⁹ See 'Central Intelligence Agency's "Situation Reports," 1947–1951', Paper no. 10, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP72-00121A000100020002-0.pdf>; Woodrow Kuhn, 'The Beginning of Intelligence Analysis in CIA: The Office of Reports and Estimates: CIA's First Center for Analysis', *Studies in Intelligence* 66, no. 3 (2020): 1–20. These situation reports outlined the political, military, economic, and diplomatic status of a country and evaluated that country's geostrategic interest to the USA (Paper no. 10, 1). Some of the US debates about these reports diffusely and indirectly echo 1960s debates in PNG about patrol reports and situation reports.

⁵⁰ Donald Denoon mentions situation reports written by patrol officers in *Getting under the Skin: The Bougainville Copper Agreement and the Creation of the Panguna Mine* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000), 26. He positioned them, without further elaboration, in broad processes of 'bureaucratic abstraction' in communication between staff in Bougainville and those in Canberra. In contrast to Denoon's point about abstraction I argue below that some secret situation reports from Bougainville were descriptively dense.

⁵¹ For those interested, the airforce reports were sometimes known as airops rather than sitreps. It seems that these types of reports would have been well known to patrol officers in PNG after the Second World War as many of them were ex-soldiers. Charles D. Rowley on the *PNG Attitude* site observed that 'nearly all students' initially at ASOPA were ex-servicemen. Many had 'served in ANGAU which ... had been concerned mainly with winning the war, and welfare was secondary. Thus, in our courses we tried to provoke students to rethink conclusions which they had formed of the proper role of the Australians in New Guinea', <https://www.pngattitude.com/2007/10/milestones-in-1.html>.

⁵² First Army General (Operations) Branch, 1944, part 1, Situation reports, Australian Military Forces, Army headquarters, formation and unit diaries, 1939–45, AWM52 1/3/2/35, RCDIG1021059, <https://www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search?query=AWM52%201%2F3%2F2%2F35-1944%2C%20part%201%2C%20Situation%20reports%2C%20RCDIG1021059.&collection=true>.

production of situation reports by patrol officers working with Australian defence personnel. Philip Fitzpatrick went on:

a couple of special patrols along the border with West Papua in 1969 with Bill Laphorne, an Army Warrant Officer based in Kiunga but couldn't find the reports in the archives in Port Moresby when I checked in the late 1990s ... Those reports had Situation Reports that I expect were extracted by the spooks, but the rest of the report was pretty innocuous and should have survived.⁵³

Security issues seem to have interested Ellis, but what we know about Ellis is mainly derived from what people assert about him rather from less opinionated archival sources. These accounts assert his apparent toughness, effectiveness, and ability to intensely repress civic and political disturbances that might pose a risk to state rule. The administrator, Hay, noted that Ellis was a 'very dictatorial sort' who was 'rough and in some senses brutal'; he also admired Ellis's 'loyalty and ... deep sense of responsibility'.⁵⁴ After the killing of Ellis's colleague Emmanuel in August 1971,⁵⁵ Ellis, according to Hay, began 'a period of intensive and active patrolling in which – well, you can put it in various ways – the rule of law was restored'.⁵⁶

While events concerning Emmanuel's death took place around Rabaul in East New Britain, it is likely that events in Bougainville also influenced Ellis's understanding of situation reports. Situation reports were written and sent weekly to the

⁵³ Available at: <https://www.pngattitude.com/2019/12/those-old-patrol-reports-ii.html>. On tensions between Australia and Indonesia concerning PNG, see R.J. May, ed., *Between Two Nations: The Indonesia–Papua New Guinea Border and West Papua Nationalism* (Bathurst, NSW: Robert Brown and Associates, 1986); David Webster, 'Self-Determination Abandoned: The Road to the New York Agreement on West New Guinea (Papua), 1960–62', *Indonesia* 95 (2013): 9–24. In 1990, Tony Friend, Conzinc Riotinto of Australia, an ex-patrol officer then working for the PNG government, wrote a 'situation report' on Indonesian army incursions into PNG's territory. Tony Friend ADO area Co-ordinator, 21 June 1990, Situation Report, Yapsei Station (held in the private archive of Maria Friend). This suggests that these particular types of situation reports have a long and interesting post-independence history that is still to be adequately explored.

⁵⁴ Stuart Doran, ed., *Australia and Papua New Guinea, 1966–1969* (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2006), 62.

⁵⁵ Donald Denoon, *A Trial Separation: Australia and the Decolonisation of Papua New Guinea* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2012), 63. Ellis had appointed Emmanuel to deal with the Mataungan Association – an influential political movement in the Gazelle Peninsula that was highly active in rejecting the multi-racial local council established by the Australian Administration. Ian Downs, *The Australian Trusteeship Papua New Guinea, 1945–75* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1980), 340. Emmanuel was killed by supporters of the Mataungan Association. In response Ellis initiated a strong police response and asked for support from the Australian army. Hay, who was the administrator of PNG at the time recalled that 'Ellis, with all his faults, was an expert in how to arrest people – that is what he loved doing better than anything else – and is the kind of fieldwork that comes naturally to staff'. Denoon, *A Trial Separation*, 63.

⁵⁶ Denoon, *A Trial Separation*, 63.

DDA headquarters in Port Moresby, usually by patrol officers based at Kieta, the Bougainville district's capital.⁵⁷ These reports were updates on the progress of the development of the Conzinc Riotinto of Australia (CRA) mine in Bougainville. From 1967 to 1969, they were sent every week to the administrator in Port Moresby who would then telex 'them sometimes with comment, sometimes with amendment – to Canberra. In August 1969, Prime Minister Gorton demanded daily reports'.⁵⁸ Bill Brown was made very aware of the importance his superior officers in Port Moresby placed on these reports when he failed to deliver them:

I was soon being chastised for failing to obey the requirement that I radio 'a weekly situation report to reach DDA headquarters by Thursday evening each week'. I soon learnt that 'nothing to report' or 'no change since last report' was unacceptable. My bosses in Port Moresby had to have news to pass on to Canberra.⁵⁹

There was a clear and increasing demand from the centre of colonial administration for the kind of knowledge contained in these telexed situation reports, which persisted well into Ellis's time as director. These reports look like military situation reports, and each telex typically referred to itself as a 'Bougainville sitrep'.⁶⁰ These situation reports were highly event focused, with each sentence outlining a specific event presented as separate from the other events. The reports were usually no longer than a page, which further intensified their similarity with the military situation report.⁶¹ They were marked as 'confidential' rather than given the secret status of military situation reports.

Ellis may have also been aware of fully secret situation reports that provided very detailed intelligence concerning Bougainville.⁶² I have seen two examples of this type of situation report located in a file that is boldly labelled SECRET. One report from October 1968 had a header on each of its 17 pages that stated the page was

⁵⁷ Douglas Oliver, in a 1968 report to Conzinc Riotinto of Australia (CRA), 'noted that there appears to be a regular flow of intelligence from the DDC Kieta'. Denoon, *Getting under the Skin*, 219.

⁵⁸ Bill Brown, *A Kiap's Chronicle* (Papua New Guinea Association of Australia Inc., 2019), 185.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ These telexed messages were named situation reports from around mid-April 1967 (NAA A452 1967/3861). It is not yet clear as to when these situation reports started and ceased, or who originated their use.

⁶¹ For an example see NAA A452, 1967/3861, 13.

⁶² Ellis may have seen such situation reports when he was a member of the Territory Intelligence Committee (TIC). In June 1969 Ellis was acting chairman of TIC. Doran, *Australia and Papua New Guinea, 1966–1969*, 789 (note 1). He was also active in developing intelligence on the Mataungan Association. On 9 December 1969, Hay thought that the Mataungan Association supporters might launch an assault on key points in Rabaul and stated he wanted Ellis to be in charge of the administration's response. He noted Ellis 'will have extra staff in the planning [,] operational [,] intelligence and information side'. Ibid., 974, square brackets in original.

secret.⁶³ This status was enthusiastically signalled even though the content of the report was more like an ordinary patrol report, as can be seen in the following list of contents of the report:

- A Present Position of Damen Manukai of Irang, funds collected and Association of Landowners.
- B Connection, if any, between Damen Manukai and the Hahalis Society ...
- C Connection with the British Solomons Island Protectorate
- D Bougainville People in the Army
- E Role of the Mission 1 Marist Mission
 - 2 United Church
 - 3 Seventh Day Adventist
- F Attitude towards Administration: Buin Sub-District
 - Kieta Sub-District
 - Buka District
- G Views of CRA leaders
- H Bougainville Referendum
- Appendix CRA Submission

Bougainville's secret situation reports were a model for the senior staff who read them of what might be headquarters-relevant knowledge. These reports did not just travel to Port Moresby; they travelled to ministerial offices in Canberra – the ultimate apex of the Australian government of PNG. This circulation, plus the documents' status as state secrets, clearly indexed the 'superiority of the professionally informed'⁶⁴ collective that could access them while also protecting this collective's knowledge from public scrutiny. A secret situation report, by its secrecy alone, defined what was valuable knowledge to the state. However, as can be seen from the list of topics outlined above, the secret situation reports contained detailed accounts of local politics in Bougainville, which could have been expressed in already existing public patrol reports. Nonetheless, secret reports conveyed something of greater value than any public equivalent since such reports had their value and significance amplified by complex restrictions on circulation to a chosen elite and by limited public accountability. It may be that some notion of the value of an

⁶³ NAA A452, 1968/4999 Territory of Papua New Guinea – Territory Intelligence Report – Situation Report on the Bougainville District [29pp], Item ID 3112186, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=3112186>. See also Denoon, *Getting under the Skin*, 78–9.

⁶⁴ Weber cited in David Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2016), 150.

official state secret motivated Ellis in choosing the name ‘situation report’ for what was a public report.

THE PUBLIC SITUATION REPORT AND SOME RELATIONS WITH PATROL REPORTS

The first official indication of Ellis’s interest in asking patrol officers to write public situation reports emerged in a circular instruction on patrol reporting issued by Director Ellis in June 1968.⁶⁵ As indicated above situation reports started appearing as a type of patrol report after this date.⁶⁶ In 1970 a new version of Departmental standing instructions further specified what a situation report might be and its relationship to other types of patrol reports.⁶⁷ As of 1 July 1970, there were to be at least three kinds of patrol reports, all of which could include a situation report:

- i Special Purpose Patrol – Front jacket, patrol diary, a report on the particular purpose, any additional information of the ‘Situation Report’ type.
- ii Census Patrol of all villages in all census divisions of each subject District – Front jacket, Patrol Diary, a Situation Report and Area Study, Appendices of census data, Appendices of other information not covered above, a Map
- iii Patrol Reports covering other than Annual Census Patrols will comprise: – Information for the Front Jacket, Patrol Diary, A Situation Report (NB an Area Report will not be compiled), Appendices on particular information not covered above, a Map.⁶⁸

A situation report was defined as an important part of all three types of patrol reports, but it was the fundamental defining feature of the type (iii) report. When in a type (iii) patrol report, a situation report had the capacity to take the place of an area study. However, in these instructions, it could not do this when it was part of the annual census patrol (type (ii)). To add to the complexity some patrol officers thought that an area study in a census patrol could exclude a situation report. Patrol Officer Diamond noted that a patrol he undertook in 1970 was:

⁶⁵ This set of instructions was also known as Headquarters Circular 67-1-0 of 21/6/68. John Wiltshire, Annual Census. Assistant District Commissioner to J.A. Wiltshire, Instructions, Patrol no. 1 of 1968/69, 8 July–2 August 1968, National Archives of PNG, Patrol Reports, Bougainville District, Kieta Station, 1968–69, vol. 17, https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb1913059w/_1.pdf.

⁶⁶ E.g. R.E. Weber, when asked to define the type of patrol report he was submitting in late 1968, indicated it was a situation report. See his Woitape Patrol no. 1 of 1968/69, 9–23 October 1968, National Archives of PNG, Central District, Goilala Subdistrict, Woitape Station, 1968–69, vol. 7, <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb6793501g>. In the 1970s situation reports were also understood to be a part of a patrol report.

⁶⁷ Territory of Papua New Guinea, Division of District Administration, *General Field Administration*, vol. 1, rev. ed. (Port Moresby: Government Printer, 1970).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 11, underlining in original.

only an attempt to update the current area study for the Census Division and so does not contain too much new information. The normal Situation Report is not included, as it would only be repeating what has been said in the area study.⁶⁹

The 1970 standing instructions created further difficulties by noting that a situation report could contain relevant data under the following four broad headings:

- i Political
- ii Economic
- iii Social
- iv Miscellaneous.⁷⁰

Providing an 'update' on any political, economic, or social issue significantly overlapped with topics already covered by other components of a patrol report. The situation report, as defined, was not confined to generating knowledge of emergencies or threats that were the key topics of the secret situation reports emerging from Bougainville. The public situation report could cover many of the same topics dealt with by existing patrol reports, especially those covered in area studies.

The 1970 standing orders outlined that the events in a situation report differed from other parts of the patrol report. The standing orders differentiated a situation report from other aspects of a patrol report by giving it a distinct and more valuable status associated with 'importance' and 'priority'. A situation report was to be:

regarded as the most important aspect of reporting and the forwarding of situation reports will be given absolute priority on completion of a patrol. Where Special Reports, census compilation or area studies are also required as a result of a patrol, the forwarding of the situation report will not be delayed awaiting the completion of these additional reporting requirements. However, it is essential that Area studies submitted at a later date are given the same patrol number as the Situation Report supplied.⁷¹

These instructions suggest that situation reports might refer to types of events, possibly emergencies, that needed an immediate response from senior staff.⁷² Ordinary patrol reports, including area reports, did not circulate in the

⁶⁹ Robert Diamond, Lake Murray Census/Routine Administration, Patrol no. 3 of 1970/71, 20 November–2 December 1970, National Archives of PNG, Patrol Reports, Western District, Morehead Subdistrict and Station, 1970–71, vol. 16, <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb4916701n>.

⁷⁰ Territory of Papua and New Guinea, *General Field Administration*, 1970, 13.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Situation reports now routinely used by relief organizations were not well developed during this time. By the 1980s, the United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation (UNDRO) had still not 'developed a standard format for situation reports'. Mark Allen, Zakaria Sibahi, and Earl Sohm, *Evaluation of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-Ordinator. Joint Inspection Unit* (Geneva: UNDRO, 1980), 10. The Papua New Guinea Disaster Management Team and the UN currently produces

same way because they did not provide knowledge of equivalent value to headquarters. The 1970 standing orders emphasized a further difference between the situation report and other aspects of a patrol report by highlighting how brevity was a key feature of the content under the four headings:

Information is to be submitted in Patrol Reports under the above four headings [Political, Economic, Social and Miscellaneous] in the form of summaries of significant aspects, developments and trends: assessment and evaluation of attitudes, situations, groups and individuals. Detailed descriptions except in particular instances obviously requiring out of the ordinary treatment, are to be avoided, but an outline of background essential to a proper appreciation or understanding of a particular item must always be provided.⁷³

The situation report’s brevity was similar to the military situation reports and the telexed situation reports that patrol officers produced in Bougainville. Yet, any brevity was undercut by the large number of issues falling within the range of the named topic areas – political, social, economic, and miscellaneous. Such categories were likely to encourage, rather than restrict, detailed descriptions and suggest that a situation report could be the equivalent of an entire patrol report. The situation report was defined in contradictory ways that created ambiguities requiring clarification.

Ellis attempted to clarify what a patrol report should contain in circular instructions dated 25 November 1971. He declared:

there will be one type of patrol report only and this will consist of:

Report Jacket,

Field Officers Journal,

Patrol Instruction,

The Report, with comments (if initial Area Study submitted, this Report NOT required),

Area Study (if applicable),

Updating of Area Study (if applicable),

Situation Reports,

Patrol Map (if applicable).⁷⁴

numerous situation reports concerning violence and natural disaster: <https://reliefweb.int/report/papua-new-guinea/declaration-state-emergency-southern-highlands-province>. These situation reports are very different from those considered in this article and there is as yet no history of these types of situation reports in PNG or elsewhere.

⁷³ Territory of Papua and New Guinea, *General Field Administration*, 1970, 13. Author’s addition in square brackets.

⁷⁴ Papua New Guinea, Department of the Administrator, 25 November 1971, File [Circular] 67-1-0, Tom Ellis, ‘Patrol Reports’. From Bill Paterson’s private archives.

In the circular instructions Ellis emphasized that:

the report is to be used for the recording of routine information not of a situation report nature, actionable at Sub-District or District level, and of value to succeeding officers ... They are not required for patrols for which initial area studies are submitted. They will terminate at District Headquarters – NO copy is required at this Headquarters. Assistant District Commissioners are required to comment objectively on such report.⁷⁵

However, copies of the report front cover jacket were to be forwarded to headquarters. The patrol report itself was only valuable to officers resident in the sub-district and district and, like the earlier memorandum of patrol, involved events that were entirely 'actionable' at those levels.⁷⁶ Situation reports were now quite different from patrol reports since they were to contain 'information specifically of Headquarter's value and requiring Headquarter's knowledge or action'.⁷⁷ They became single-subject reports on matters of 'political significance, important trends in the economic and social structure, cult and unrest, law and order situation, problems arising from land shortages and other matters headquarters needs to know'.⁷⁸ Relevant subjects would include specific situations or events encountered on patrol that were outside the patrol instructions issued to the patrolling officer. A situation report was no longer to be easily understood as a type of area report – it was now to be more concise and highly focused. Each situation would have its own report: 'one report will be compiled for each specific topic, each to be submitted to Headquarters in duplicate'.⁷⁹ Ellis argued that because of these changes, headquarters would receive only a patrol report jacket, a situation report in duplicate, and area studies including their updates where appropriate.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 1.

⁷⁶ Another attempt to specify restriction on the circulation of local knowledge occurred in 1973 when the government published a form for the field officer's journal or patrol diary. Instructions at the bottom of the printed front cover indicated the form used for the journal was 'To be made out in Triplicate

ORIG.: D.D.C (Deputy District Commissioner) and A.D.C. (Acting District Commissioner) to forward to D.C.

DUP.: Other officers to A.D.C.

TRP.: Officer's file'.

Tony Friend, 1973, field officer's journal held in the private collection of Maria Friend.

⁷⁷ Tom Ellis, 'Patrol Reports', 2. This phrasing was also used in the printed situation report form.

⁷⁸ Ibid., underlining in the original. The underlining of the same words occurred in the circular instruction of November 1971 and in the printed situation report form. The printed front cover of the situation report included the instruction 'Use reverse side if necessary'. The implication was that any situation report should be no longer than two pages.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

While this attempt to simplify procedures of reporting was in part aimed at the ‘speeding up of reporting’, by February 1972 Ellis noted that his circular instruction of November 1971 had been ‘virtually universally misinterpreted both by patrolling officers, Sub-District and District staff’ in ways that resulted in ‘even more work and delay than under the system which it replaced. Some officers have complained about this’.⁸⁰ In response Ellis argued that ‘the Situation Reports to be prepared now have nothing to do with “Situation Reports” as under the old system as outlined on pages 13–15 of Volume 1 of Departmental Standing Instructions’. The old situation report ‘was the body of an ordinary patrol report and contained an agglomeration of fact and opinion on many topics under the major divisions “Political, Economic, Social”’.⁸¹ He also stressed that ‘general activities’ of a patrol were to be typed on the new patrol report pro-forma and repeated the idea that these reports would ‘terminate at your office’, that is at district and sub-district. He stressed that this new patrol report was not to be like the earlier ‘Political, Economic, Social’ type.⁸²

However, even after creating the single-event situation report there was still some confusion among staff concerning which reports should be submitted. In May 1972 the Alotau-based district commission of Milne Bay District sent a memo to all his field staff, which noted:

Due to the number of different styles of Patrol Reports received here from outstations, it has become necessary to remind Officers that the Secretary’s circular 67-1-0 on 25/11/71 and 24/2/72 set out the procedure that has to be followed in compiling Patrol Reports and situation reports ... Trainee Patrol Officers and Assistant Patrol Officers will submit more detailed routine patrol reports following the old style of reporting.⁸³

There was also some uncertainty among patrol officers in determining whether an event warranted using a situation report. For example, in November 1972, the assistant secretary in the Department of Administration, S.J. Pearsill, commented on an assistant district officer’s situation reports 1–4 arising out of a patrol to the upper Bamu River area, noting ‘the Situation Reports contain routine information which could have best been incorporated into a Patrol Report instead of separate Situation Reports’.⁸⁴ And in March 1972, after reviewing a Balimo patrol report, Ellis further clarified what was suitable for inclusion in a situation report.

⁸⁰ Papua New Guinea, Department of the Administrator, 24 February 1972, File [Circular] 67-1-0, ‘Patrol Reports’, 1. From Bill Paterson’s private archives.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 2. Here Ellis was apparently equating the old situation report with the older patrol report.

⁸³ Fulton Driver, District Commission, Memo on Patrol Report, 19 May 1972. From Bill Paterson’s private archives.

⁸⁴ Richard Randolph, Emeti Patrol no. 2 of 1972/73, 5–8 July, 12–15 July, 14–16 July 1972, National Archives of PNG, Patrol Reports, Western District, Emeti Station, 1972–73, vol. 7, https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb0172626c/_1.pdf.

He wrote, 'I found the information on the ban over the consumption of coconuts interesting. The item would have made an appropriate Situation Report'.⁸⁵ The five-year ban was designed to promote the sale of coconuts as copra, and if this prohibition was violated, the consumer would violently throw up. The patrol officer Fitzpatrick reported:

in a coconut grove near the village resthouse a small (3 foot high) carving had been erected, this the 'tambu' personified ... It is also interesting to note that upon the arrival of Mr Crawford, an artefact collector from the Adelaide Museum, the 'tambu' was removed and hidden.⁸⁶

Ellis indicates not just his own interest in this ethnographic topic but also reiterates his understanding that situation reports were not confined to national issues such as political threats or uncertain security. Ethnographic content of the kind found in a classical patrol report could still potentially be part of a situation report. Ellis's concerns with custom and culture were uneasily combined with the demand for a situation report's knowledge to be about events of immediate, urgent relevance. Determining what events might be included in a situation report remained a persistent problem. In February 1973, District Commissioner Bunting created a minute to Ellis explaining that he was forwarding a 1972 patrol report by ADO Lanaghan:

for your consideration of section concerning timber lease payments on p 6. This matter should have been a situation report as it is developing and has broader, serious ramifications if the attitudes and misunderstanding of the people proceeds unchecked. You will be further advised as necessary. Further related comments are made in Situation Report 2.⁸⁷

As with the earlier development of the memorandum of patrol, by 1973 there were effectively two kinds of reports with two modes of circulation – one valuable to headquarters and an ordinary patrol report that remained in the periphery at district and sub-district levels. Yet, the situation report could still range across a wide array of topics that could, in effect, replicate aspects of an ordinary patrol report. It was also the case that other parts of the patrol report could be relatively easily re-classified as headquarters relevant. In January 1975 the district commissioner (of Western Province) commented on a patrol report on the Tomu Wawoi Falls areas and noted that 'although Area studies are no longer required at the Headquarters, I am forwarding the original of the study as compiled by Mr. Luoma for your information as it

⁸⁵ Philip Fitzpatrick, Balimo Patrol no. 3 of 1971/72, 10–17 January 1972, National Archives of PNG, Patrol Reports, Western District, Balimo Station, 1971–72, vol. 16, <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb6452551x>.

⁸⁶ Fitzpatrick, Balimo Patrol no. 3 of 1971/72.

⁸⁷ Raymond Lanaghan, Bewani Patrol no. 1 of 1972/73, 23–31 October 1972, National Archives of PNG, Patrol Reports, West Sepik, Bewani Station, 1972–73, vol. 1, https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb3073578c/_1.pdf.

reveals some inside information of the Tomu River Census Division’. The possibility of ‘inside information’ was seemingly sufficient to justify sending the area report to the secretary of the Department of the Chief Minister and Development Administration and overcoming formal restrictions on the flow of local knowledge to the centre.⁸⁸

Overall, the reception among field staff of the single subject situation report suggests there was no clear epistemological break between the new situation report and pre-existing components of patrol reports. As a result, defining what knowledge should be the subject of a patrol report or a situation report remained problematic. Nonetheless, the shift towards transactions in front jackets (also known as cover sheets), highlighted that by the time of formal self-government the production of certain types of knowledge by field patrol officers was largely irrelevant to their own department’s headquarters and to national politics generally. By 1973 the printed cover sheet for a normal patrol report instructed patrol officers that it was ‘for recording of routine information not of a situation report nature, actionable at Subdistrict or District level, and of value to succeeding officers. No copy is required at Headquarters’.⁸⁹

All that was needed at headquarters was just the front jacket and some indication of what the patrol was about. This ensured that headquarters had a brief record of the patrol should it need to acquire a full copy of a patrol report. Sending headquarters only the front jacket of a patrol became common practice.⁹⁰ By the time of formal independence in 1975 most patrols tended to be restricted to a census patrol prior to any election followed by a patrol for the running of the actual election.⁹¹

CONCLUSION

Sketching a history of the changing form and structure of patrol reports in PNG makes the point that patrol reports were always subject to change and that such

⁸⁸ Paul Luoma. Situation Report of P/R No.6-74/75, Tomu River Census Division, Lake Murray Subdistrict, Western District, National Archives of Papua New Guinea, Western District, Nomad Station, vol. 12, https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb0036110b/_1.pdf. Aesthetic issues of proper report formatting also helped make the reports that emerged from this patrol headquarters relevant. The assistant district commissioner commented that Situation Report 1 ‘covers a lot of topics really which should have been dealt more properly under separate headings if warranted for Headquarters notice’.

⁸⁹ Roger Gleeson’s Buin Patrol no. 2 1972/73, is an example of a patrol report forwarded to headquarters that is only a single cover sheet. National Archives of PNG, Patrol Reports, Bougainville District, Buin Station, 1972–73, vol. 10, https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb68960339/_1_1.pdf.

⁹⁰ It is worth reiterating this was not just a pre-independence achievement but was preceded by the creation of the memorandum of patrol, which had similar effects to the circulation of front jackets.

⁹¹ William Leben, “‘Government by Inspection’: Australian Rule in the “Forgotten West” of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, 1960–73’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 69 (2023): 629–46.

changes to the report were a significant influence on the report's content and impact. The content of any patrol report is linked to a history of that report's making. I have argued that this involved understanding how patrol reports were an outcome of the mundane politics of documenting knowledge outlined above by focusing on the reports' explicit directives, para-textual devices, and inter-textual relations. This emphasis on such textual politics showed how different types of rules and practices concerning knowledge production and circulation generated relations between knowledge and power that might otherwise have been overlooked. What emerged was a bureaucratic imaginary of the PNG nation whose foundational feature was that it was composed of de-totalizing singular events or situations. Situations were increasingly central to knowledge production and its spatial organization while holistic concepts of 'society' or 'custom' became relatively less salient to understanding features of PNG's political and social order.⁹²

What was also outlined was the decline of the bureaucratic centre's knowledge of the national periphery by a devaluation of the patrol report.⁹³ This involved altering and restricting, rather than eliminating, the flow of locally relevant knowledge to the centre while amplifying the flow of event-focused nationally relevant situation reports. The headquarters of the state bureaucracy did not require the periphery to be fully visible. The resulting opacity of the periphery in theory reduced the centre's accountability and responsibility for certain types of regional events and enhanced their containment to the regional and local levels.⁹⁴

⁹² A broader history of ideas might attempt to understand the emergence of an emphasis on events and situations in colonial PNG as related to debates in anthropology about the colonial situation. Max Gluckman, 'Analysis of Social Situation in Modern Zululand', *Bantu Studies* 14, no. 1 (1940): 1–30; Carlo Rossetti, 'B. Malinowski, the Sociology of "Modern Problems" in Africa and the Colonial Situation', *Cahiers d'études africaines* 25, no. 100 (1985): 477–503; George Balandier, 'The Colonial Situation: A Theoretical Approach', in *Social Change: The Colonial Situation*, ed. Immanuel Wallerstein (London: Wiley, 1966), 34–61. The Manchester school's emphasis on situation analysis and an anthropology of events is important to my approach to patrol reports, see Bruce Kapferer, 'Introduction. In the Event – Toward an Anthropology of Generic Moments', *Social Analysis* 54, no. 3 (2010): 1–27. Handelman, who studied anthropology at Manchester, was also influenced by Goffman's work on interactive situations and frames, see Don Handelman, 'Frame', in *Theorizing Ritual*, ed. Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek, and Michael Stausberg (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 571–82; Gary Jaworski, 'Goffman and the "Situation" in Sociology', in *The Anthem Companion to Erving Goffman*, ed. Hviid Jacobsen (New York: Anthem Press, 2023), 73–90.

⁹³ A more complete account of this proposition would situate the patrol report in a broader history of the colonial government's files and documents. For recent analysis of files see Ben Kafka, 'Paperwork: The State of the Discipline', *Book History* 12 (2009): 340–53; Matthew S. Hull, Stefan Nellen, and Thomas Rohringer, 'Towards a History of Files', *Administrory* 4, no. 1 (2019): 3–9.

⁹⁴ For further discussion of state optics, see James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Li, 'Beyond "the State"'; Natalia Buitron and Hans Steinmüller, 'Governing Opacity: Regimes of Intention Management and Tools of Legibility', *Ethnos* 88, no. 4 (2021): 677–701.

The changes to patrol reporting outlined above were never fully homogenizing nor hegemonic. Uncertainties about what kind of knowledge should be produced were never really resolved but instead were reproduced in persisting internal debates from 1958 until self-government in 1973. So-called 'common sense' knowledge about what was headquarters relevant was neither shared nor automatically self-evident to many patrol officers. Many of the understandings of national unity and national significance that informed changes to report writing primarily emerged from a headquarters-based senior leadership that was already a somewhat exclusive self-contained autonomous polity. This leadership's perspective did not necessarily reflect the views of more junior officers or patrol officers of PNG heritage. Nor did it reflect the views of the PNG members of a government soon to become formally independent of Australia.

In addition, the history of the patrol report outlined above was largely confined to the memorandum of patrol and the situation report. There are other parts of the pre-independence patrol report whose histories are yet to be adequately explored, such as area studies, which had complex inter-textual relations with situation reports while also sharing common military origins.⁹⁵ There are now new forms of knowledge circulating in PNG involving 'situational analysis' that may be indirect descendants of the types of situation reports already mentioned in this article.⁹⁶

The changes to patrol reports I have outlined only had a fleeting influence. After self-government in 1973 and formal independence in 1975 many of the patrol officers themselves, and their functions, were dispersed into positions associated with the new institutions of local, provincial, and national government. The emergence of foreign enclaves of resource extraction primarily associated with the mining industry also influenced what patrol officers could do in the emerging independent state. In the 1970s and 1980s, mining companies employed a number of ex-patrol officers as community liaison officers.⁹⁷ Their work often involved social surveys of villages affected by mines, and the surveys replicated topics previously covered in patrol reports, area reports, and situation reports.⁹⁸ Legislation regulating the Ok Tedi mine required

⁹⁵ Reuben Bowd, *A Basis for Victory: The Allied Geographical Section 1942–1946* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 2005), 1–18; Alan Powell, *The Third Force: ANGAU's New Guinea War, 1942–1946* (South Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁹⁶ Arnold Kukari, *A Situational Analysis of Education in Papua New Guinea* (Port Moresby: Papua New Guinea Department of Education, 2018), <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/papua-new-guinea-education-sector-analysis-2018>.

⁹⁷ Glenn Banks and Chris Ballard, 'The Return of the Kiap: Recolonising Rural Papua New Guinea', in *Emerging from Empire? Decolonisation in the Pacific*, ed. Donald Denoon (Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1997), 160–4; Bruce Knauff, 'Like Money You See in a Dream: Petroleum and Patrols in South New Guinea', *Oceania* 64, no. 2 (1993): 187–90.

⁹⁸ Colin Filer, *Methods in the Madness: The "Landowner Problem" in the PNG LNG Project*, Development Policy Centre Discussion Paper no. 76 (Canberra: Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University, 2019), 9.

such surveys to outline ‘population structure, population growth, settlement patterns, inter-clan and inter-hamlet relations, traditional movements, land use patterns, ... nutritional health status and cultural or archaeological sites of importance to the people’.⁹⁹ Colin Filer notes the similarity of such requirements to the knowledge generated in patrol reports.¹⁰⁰ He also highlights how this transformation of such knowledge into social mapping and the politics of resource extraction intensified the contestability of that knowledge. Interested parties can now contest in court the knowledge contained in corporate and state documents. What emerged was a new political economy of knowledge that has further revalued and devalued the knowledge in state archives, patrol reports, and situation reports.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.