

**STATEMENT BY 21683 COLONEL ALFRED TUATOKO, CM, MSD, Grad Dip Mnmgt Studies, Grad Dip Strat Studies, jssc, psc, Fiji Infantry Corps**

A 2004 budget briefing by DMR (Capt Teleni) was scheduled for Tuesday 16 December, 2003. Present in this briefing were CLF, DMR, DSC&FD, CO ENGR, CO 3FIR, Maj Balawa, CO FTG, Comdr T Koroi, Maj S Vatu and WO1 Leweni. During the course of the briefing, Comd RFMF rang DMR and advised him to have all members in the briefing await him and also have COL Kadavulevu present.

When Comd RFMF arrived he took over the meeting and advised us of his intent to remove the current Government except for the MFA&ET and the GCC. Commander RFMF also indicated that some NGO's and Diplomatic Corp are behind him. The Comd instructed that we draw up plans for the removal of the Government and to provide a back briefing to him on his return on the 21 December 2003 from his visit to Labasa. LTCOL Pita Driti then said in the conference "...io, vinaka me caka ni sa rui levu na butako". Commander RFMF then rang the Ministry of Home Affairs and asked to speak to the Minister. When he was told that the Minister was not available, he asked for the Parliamentary sitting schedule for 2004. He ended the conference by saying "dou cakava vaka totolo na plan de dou qai kidacala au sa liu sobu i ra."

After the Comd left the meeting we decided that we would not draw up plans for the military takeover as this was a criminal and treasonable act. However the staff of HQ RFMF would draw up an advice for Comd RFMF advising him against his intention to remove the Government.

On Thursday 18 December during Comds scheduled conference he reiterated his intent to remove the Government of the day save HE, the President and that we were to continue to draw up plans for the takeover of government. He added that he did not want anybody sitting on the fence and if anyone does not agree with his intention, is to leave. At the end of this meeting Comd personally interviewed several officers. These officers are Col Kadavulevu, Col Tuatoko, Capt(N) Teleni, LTCOL Raduva and Comdrs Koroi and Natuva.

In my interview with Comd he stated that he would forcefully remove the present government if his term as Comd RFMF was not renewed. I advised him that such an act was illegal and amounted to treason. I advised him that there are legal ways to settle his disagreement with government and that he must follow that legal path. Comd said that doing so would take too much time. He said that removing the government may be legally wrong but was morally correct. He also said that he must remain as Comd because there was no one who could be Comd and pursue the May 2000 prosecutions as he is doing.

I told him that the issue regarding the renewal of his term was a matter between him and government. He should not use the institution as a means of renewing his term. Comd did not accept this and asked where I stood regarding his intention to remove government. I



told him that I could not support him on such an illegal and treasonable act. Comd than directed that I keep out of the planning activities. My interview thus ended.


Following the individual interviews we spoke amongst ourselves and accept for Comdr Natuva whom I did not speak to, we all had advised Comd that his intention was illegal and treasonable and that each of us did not support the Comd in such an activity. Col GK than advised us that we must provide Comd with a written advise in order to convince him not to carry out his intent. The advice should be ready for Comd before 31 Dec. The advice was actually tendered to the Comd in early Jan 04.

On 19 December 2003 at the WOs&SGTs Mess, in his address to the officers and senior non-commissioned officers, he said that 2004 will be a difficult year and our individual loyalty to him (Commander RFMF) will be put to the test.

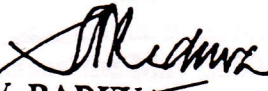
On the afternoon of Monday 12 January, COS HQ RFMF called a meeting of the HQ RFMF staff and advised that he had been relieved of his appointment and told to go leave because of the advice that was tendered to Comd advising him against his intent to remove the government. Comd also advised him that all officers who formed or contributed to the advice are to also go on leave.

Comd RFMF called a conference on Tuesday 13 January 04 and amongst other things advised the conference that we should not be shaken by the ongoing saga over the renewal or otherwise of his term as Comd RFMF. He also advised the conference that he had relieved Col Kadavulevu of the COS HQ RFMF appointment and has nominated LTCOL Baleidroka as COS because he was disappointed with the written advice he received. He also directed that all the officers who formed the advice and all officers at both SHQ and LFC who did not support him on the path he was taking the RFMF, to stick to their principles, take all outstanding leave and when their leave was finished, that they do the honourable thing and resign from the RFMF. He also mentioned that he was only testing us in the interviews and that he would not force anyone to resign.

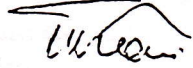
On Thurs 15 Jan I received a posting order showing amongst other changes that LTCOL J Pickering had assumed my appointment of DSC&FD.

  
A. TUATOKO  
Colonel

// March 2004

Witness:   
S.V. RADUYA  
Lieutenant Colonel

// March 2004

  
T. T. KOROI  
Commander (N)

// March 2004