



5th November 2025

RSIPF DSU achieves historic civil aviation certification

The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) has reached a major milestone in modern policing capability, with the Civil Aviation Authority of Solomon Islands (CAASI) officially certifying the RSIPF Drone Support Unit (DSU) as an authorized Unmanned Aircraft Operator under Part 102 of the Civil Aviation Act 2008 and associated rules.

Issued under Certificate No. CAASI.UAO.01/2025, the certification formally recognizes the RSIPF as a registered organization approved to conduct unmanned aerial operations within Solomon Islands airspace. Valid until 30 September 2027, this marks a historic turning point for the RSIPF's ability to deploy autonomous air support without external authorization.

Until now, the DSU had operated under the guidance of the RSIPF & Australian Federal Police Partnership Program (RAPPP) Advisor, Peter Young, who served as Chief Drone Pilot. With CAASI's endorsement, RSIPF DSU members can now independently plan, authorize, and execute drone missions in accordance with an approved operational framework.

RSIPF Supervising Commissioner Ian Vaevaso said the certification was a proud moment for the organization.

"This certification represents more than compliance; it is a statement of trust, professionalism, and national progress," Supervising Commissioner Vaevaso said.

He said, "It demonstrates that the RSIPF has the systems, training, and leadership required to meet national aviation standards and operate safely within Solomon Islands' airspace."

The RSIPF DSU currently comprises four full-time and eight part-time members, all commercially licensed and trained through a New Zealand-based accredited provider. Supported by RAPPP since its inception, the unit has developed and refined a comprehensive operational framework aligned with CAASI Advisory Circular 102-1, ensuring that all missions meet international aviation safety benchmarks.

The DSU operates a diverse fleet, including

- 1 × Matrice 200
- 2 × Matrice M30
- 8 × Mavic 2
- 7 × Mavic 3

The unit also maintains a purpose-built UAV command vehicle, enhancing operational reach during complex missions. This mobile platform integrates redundant power systems, RF communications, and live-streaming capability, enabling real-time intelligence for RSIPF commanders during major operations such as the Pacific Games 2023, the National General Elections 2024, and the Pacific Islands Forum 2025.

Media inquiries

RSIPF Media Unit:
24016 or 23800 Ext 239

Email:
rsipf.media@rsipf.gov.sb

The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) was established in 1954. It's mission is 'To provide a safe and peaceful Solomon Islands by strengthening relationships with the community'. The RSIPF strive to provide efficient and effective policing services for the Solomon Islands and expect RSIPF officers to adhere to the RSIPF values.

For ongoing news and information, please go to www.rsipf.gov.sb

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With the certification in place, the RSIPF DSU is now authorized to provide continuous drone air support for policing, search and rescue, disaster response, and public safety missions within a nationally regulated framework. The approval also strengthens coordination between RSIPF and CAASI, ensuring the safe integration of unmanned aircraft into controlled airspace.

AFP Commander Hall O'Meagher congratulated the RSIPF on the milestone. "This is an extraordinary achievement that reflects years of investment, training, and partnership," Commander O'Meagher said.

Commander O'Meagher said, "It demonstrates how the RSIPF is embracing technology to strengthen operational capability and deliver safer, smarter policing outcomes for communities across the Solomon Islands."

Originally conceptualized in 2021 as a part-time initiative under the National Response Department, the DSU has evolved into a full-time operational capability through sustained partnership and professional development supported by RAPPP. The RSIPF now stands as the first organization in the Solomon Islands to achieve CAASI Part 102 operational certification.

DSU Officer-in-Charge, Sergeant Molly Puiaraha, said the certification marks the beginning of a new chapter for the RSIPF. "We have built this capability from the ground up, and now we can proudly operate as a fully certified national unit, ready to serve and protect with technology that meets international standards," Sergeant Puiaraha said.

This achievement symbolizes a new era for policing in the Solomon Islands—one where technology, training, and trust converge to enhance national security and operational readiness.

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Photos and captions

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Supervising Commissioner Ian Vaevaso (Second from left) with Drone Support unit officers of the RSIPF

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(L-R) Sergeant Christopher Walerefoa and Sergeant Molly Puiaraha during the drone certification presentation at Rove police headquarters.

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Supervising Commissioner Ian Vaevaso (Centre) looking through the Certificate with RAPPP Superintendent of National Operations Dave Williams (second from Left), while RAPPP Advisor Byron Vivian (Right) and DSU Drone Operator Andrew Pitakoe (Left) look on

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Official group photo during the program

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Drone Support Unit (DSU) Officers (L-R) Christopher Walerefoa , Andrew Pitakoe and Molly Puiaraha during the program