

Bamaga Signals Intelligence Station

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Introduction

Location:

- 10° 53' 6.5" S, 142° 23' 44" E.
- Next to the Army Reserve Depot / Bamaga Training Depot, corner of Elu Street and Poi Poi Street, Bamaga, QLD, 4876
- [Google Maps](#)
- [Terraserver](#)
- Google Earth

The Australian Signals Division operates a signals intelligence station near Bamaga at the very tip of the York Peninsula in Far North Queensland. [1] The station was established in 1988 at a estimated cost of \$25 million. The station primarily monitors communications in the Papua-New Guinea region, and was established with a special mission to follow activities in the Bougainville region. It is operated as a remote facility by a detachment from Cabarlah. [2]

[caption id="attachment_31627" align="aligncenter" width="1280"]



Bamaga Signals Intelligence Station, Google Earth, 26 April 2009[/caption]

To the east of the facility buildings a remnant of a 305 m. diameter CDA (circular disposed antenna array) is visible, most likely with the earth mat still in place after the masts were removed. In a smaller field south of the facility buildings, antenna masts are visible on Terraserver 2009 images. According to Desmond Ball the DSD facility is located next to Bamaga Training Depot (Army Reserve Depot) on the corner of Elu St. and Poi Pi St. The Bamaga Training Depot is the base for a Regional Force Surveillance Unit - the Bamaga Depot of 51st Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment (51 FNQR). [3] In 1999 the Defence Department acknowledged that

‘an Army unit based in Queensland currently rotates three personnel to Bamaga on a three-monthly basis throughout the year. .. This practice has been in place for some time and will continue in the future’. [4]

In 2011 an Army engineers magazine noted that specialist members of the Army’s 7th Signals Regiment Workshop Troop were posted to Bamaga’s York Comms Det. on one-month rotations. [5] In 2002 a generator was installed at a cost of \$128,579.00. [6] In 2010 and 2011 BAE Systems was paid \$211,000 for the two stage decommissioning of Defence Australian Satellite (DEFAUSSAT) facilities at Bamaga, possibly for the Training Depot. [7] The town of Bamaga was connected to the optical fibre network in 2007. [8] In 2006-07 the Defence Department listed 10 reservists as attached to the Bamaga Training Depot. [8] The Bamaga Training Depot is the base for a Regional Force Surveillance Unit - the Bamaga Depot of 51st Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment (51 FNQR). [10] In 1955 a radio telephone station to link the mainland to Thursday Island was built very close to the site of the current ASD facility. [11] In 1991 the Papua-New Guinea government protested to the Hawke government about an SBS television report on "a mobile Defence Signals Directorate post" in the Cape York area.

"Sources close to the PNG Prime Minister said that Mr Namaliu was most perturbed by the suggestion that Australia was withholding information that could be useful to PNG in its three-year battle to put down the secession movement on Bougainville. The program

claimed that Federal Cabinet was routinely provided with reports gleaned from the directorate's monitoring of PNG's military and diplomatic communications and the radio communications of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army. But information on the Bougainville secession movement had not been passed back to the PNG authorities, the program said. This was apparently because of concerns that there was a leak in PNG's National Intelligence Organisation." [12]

References: [1] [Report on the visit of the Defence Sub-committee of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs](#), Defence and Trade to North Queensland and the Torres Strait, August 1991, Parliamentary Paper 390/1991. [2] Desmond Ball, *Signals Intelligence in the Post-Cold War Era: Developments in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993, pp. 62-63. [3] Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Portfolio Additional Estimates 2006-2007; February 2007. [Responses to questions on notice from Department of Defence](#), p. 105. [4] [Defence Determination 1999/7, Attachment B: EXPLANATORY STATEMENT](#), Defence Determination 1999/7, Defence Act, 1903. [5] LCP Juillerat and CPL Robinson, [7th Signals Regiment Workshop Troop](#), RAME Craftsman, Issue No. 63, 2011/12. [6] [Contracts Gazetted from 4 February 2003 - 30 June 2003](#), Defence Materiel Organisation. [7] [Contract Notice View - CN282563](#), Defence Materiel Organisation; and [Defence Materiel Organisation Contracts Listing for 1/7/2010 to 30/6/2011](#), Senate Order on Departmental and Agency Contracts. [8] [Cape York Peninsula Regional Economic & Infrastructure Framework Report](#), Kleinhardt Business Consultants, November 2007, p. 60. [9] ['Patrolman, Army'](#), Defence.jobs.gov.au., (September 15, 2012). [10] Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Portfolio Additional Estimates 2006-2007; February 2007. [Responses to questions on notice from Department of Defence](#), p. 105. [11] [Australia Station Intelligence Summary](#), Naval Intelligence Division, Navy Office, Melbourne, No. 32, 1 August 1955, p. 32 and [Australia Station Intelligence Summary](#), Naval Intelligence Division, Navy Office, Melbourne, No. 36, 1 December 1955, pp. 16-17. [12] Mary-Louise O'Callaghan, "PNG To Investigate Australian Spy Claim", *The Age*, 26 November 1991

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