

Leaders unhappy with SoE pullout

LEADERS in Porgera are not happy with the way the National Government has ended the state of emergency (SoE) police operations in the Porgera valley.

Frustrated leaders, public servants and a handful of people gathered at the Porgera district administration block last week after learning that the SoE police personnel had left in the morning.

The leaders, public servants and even the public were not happy when they heard the news that the 200-odd policemen and policewomen had left.

The police mobile squads from Port Moresby left the previous week while the ones deployed from the Highlands region and other parts of the coun-

try left last week.

Porgera council president John Pawe said the mass withdrawal of police personnel by the Government was a slap in the face of the people of Porgera valley.

Mr Pawe said the police department and the Government should explain to the leaders and people of Porgera why the police personnel were pulled out.

He said leaders and people in the valley were very pleased with the way the SoE police did their work and they wanted them to stay for another year or so.

"We thought that the SoE was extended for a year or so after the initial six-week period lapsed last month but now the police are gone and I don't

know what we will do," he said.

Paiala-Hewa president Grigie Don said the SoE stopped all tribal fights and all fire arms were surrendered and the illegal mining activities stopped.

"The peace and harmony that we had for the last three months will be just like a dream," Mr Don said.

The president said he was very sad when he heard that the policemen had left.

He thought that there would be an official handover-take-over ceremony.

The two council presidents called on Member for Laigaip-Porgera Philip Kikala, Enga Governor Peter Ipatas and Police Minister Sani Rambi to

come out and explain why the police personnel withdrew.

They said Mr Kikala and Mr Ipatas must push hard for the Government to reinstate the SoE because if they don't do it, things would get worse and Porgera mine might shut down.

The presidents said what the Government, Barrick PJV and the provincial government should have done before withdrawing the police was set up the proposed permanent police Mobile Squad base at Paiam town.

Porgera acting district administrator Mori Iarume said he was not happy with the mass withdrawal considering the law and order situation on the ground.