

# PAPUA NEW GUINEA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL RESEARCH



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## PRESS STATEMENT

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### FIVE IMR SCIENTISTS STILL MISSING ONE YEAR ON: REWARD

Wednesday 1 August marked 12 months since our five IMR scientists went missing in Talasea waters off West New Britain Province.

A memorial service for the scientists will be held on tomorrow, Friday 10 August at 9am at IMR's Adolf Saweri Lecture Theatre in Goroka. A plaque will be unveiled in their honour.

“On this, the saddest of anniversaries, we again offer a reward of K30, 000 for reliable information that leads to their whereabouts,” said Professor Peter Siba, Director, PNG Institute of Medical Research.

“If you know something, or know someone who does, we urge you to contact **Kimbe Police on 983 5075 or IMR on 532 2800**,” he said.

The team of five -- Gibson Gideon, Leonard Vavana, Tania Oakiva, George Dogoya and Lydia Petrus -- was travelling from the Milimata sub-health centre in Kaliai-Kove on West New Britain mainland to the outer Bali Islands, as part of a countrywide malaria survey for the National Malaria Control Programme.

But their 23-foot fibreglass dinghy (Bineve 2) with a 60 horsepower engine, arranged by the Provincial Health Office, never arrived, nor did the IMR team of five or three person crew.

Despite an intensive search, financed by IMR and led by the West New Britain Provincial Disaster Office, Provincial Health Office and provincial police force, in collaboration with with the National Maritime Safety Authority and Disaster Offices in neighbouring provinces.

Their boat was later discovered, empty of people and cargo, floating far away near Koil Island, East Sepik Province.

“All evidence suggests that the five scientists and three crew members were attacked by criminals who are still at large,” said Professor Siba.

“Unfortunately, the police investigation came to a halt last year due to a lack of funds and since then we have been waiting in vain for any conclusive report. We constantly follow-up with authorities but without any success, he said.

“In April 2012, former Police Minister John Boito agreed to assist but to date, nothing has eventuated. I call on the new O'Neill-Dion Government to fulfil their commitment to assist with the investigations into the missing researchers,” Professor Siba said.

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