

# Military pays tribute to 'David'

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The commanding officer of the Third Fiji Infantry Regiment (3FIR), Lieutenant Colonel Manoa Gadai, presents a tabua to Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama at the handover ceremony in Nabua yesterday.

Picture: ELIKI NUKUTABU

THE RFMF sent off its outgoing commander Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama yesterday, thanking him for the 15 years of service he provided.

Their traditional vakavinavinaka was presented to Commodore Bainimarama by the 3FIR commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel Manoa Gadai.

While making the presentation, Lt-Col Gadai said the soldiers of the RFMF were thankful for Commodore Bainimarama's leadership.

Speaking in the iTaukei language, Lt-Col Gadai said the army was thankful to God for preserving his life during the 2000 mutiny when rebel soldiers stormed the Queen Elizabeth Barracks.

He said Commodore Bainimarama was chosen by God to lead the army and that he had been a good and capable leader.

Lt-Col Gadai also paid tribute to the Commodore's wife, Mary Kean-Bainimarama for her part in assisting Commodore Bainimarama.

He likened Commodore Bainimarama to the biblical king and hero of Israel David, saying he had triumphed over many odds and beaten many different Goliaths.

He said Commodore Bainimarama had triumphed over naysayers in the government as well as those in the churches, and those who were using their chiefly ranks for gain.

Lt-Col Gadai said the army was also thankful to Commodore Bainimarama for staying the course he had set for himself despite threats and danger to him and his family.

His successor Brigadier General Mosese Tikoitoga also paid homage to the Prime Minister saying he had dealt with some of the most challenging events in Fiji's history.

"There was the overthrow of the government in 2000 and the ensuing chaos, which he successfully brought to an end and the subsequent mutiny," Brig-Gen Tikoitoga said.

"The history of Fiji would have been very different had either of these events succeeded and we all owe the Prime Minister our gratitude for his courage, fortitude and resolve."