



Platypus

Australian Federal Police Staff Magazine

No. 9 April 1985

THE HORROR OF A FIRESTORM — FROM 700kms UP

AFP experts probe space fire pictures

Australian Federal Police Scientific Branch members have taken a new step into the space age with the launching of a study of satellite pictures to gain new information on the disastrous fires that swept the Canberra area early in March.

The pictures were taken by one of the Landsat satellites during orbits over the ACT at a height of 700 kms.

The fires burnt out thousands of hectares of farmland and bush on the border of the ACT and New South Wales and in the ACT during a two-week period.

Senior Sergeant Bob Hanisch, of the AFP Scientific Branch, said the study was a move into space technology for the Branch.

"Our purpose in doing so is to identify as close as possible where

the fires started and the way in which they spread," he said.

Senior Constable Les Bush, from Scientific, and Senior Constable Dave Loughlin, CIB, are handling the study.

It is hoped to be able to gain considerable information on how the fires behaved in the settled rural areas and adjoining bushland through which they swept.

The Landsat series of specialised US satellites is used to analyse the earth's surface for a number of purposes.

The pictures are photographic



• Several fires burning near Canberra show up in this satellite picture as black scars. The eastern half of Lake Burley Griffin can be seen near the left-hand margin, with Queanbeyan, encircled by fire scars, a little to the right. The 'pimple' just above the lake is Mount Ainslie, most of which was previously burnt. The haze over the right of the picture is mainly smoke.

prints of a computer's analysis of millions of tiny square light-meter readings. Each square on the pictures covers a ground area of 80 metres by 80 metres.

Information provided by Landsat in Australia is made available by the Australian Landsat Station, which is part of the National Mapping Division of the Department of Resources and Energy.

The Director of the Australian Landsat Station, Mr Don Gray, said the Landsat satellite was being called on increasingly to provide information about surface conditions.

At present, mining interests made by far the greatest use of the facility. From the satellite pictures they were able to search for geological formations where they had the highest probability of finding satisfactory mineral deposits, he said.

Other uses included agriculture, environment monitoring, rangeland and water resource management, and both inshore and offshore mapping.

Mr Gray said extensive work was being done on satellite pictures in relation to fires.

In the Fitzroy area of Western Australia, authorities sought regular pictures of fire areas. From them they were gaining an idea of the origins of fires and their extent.

The pictures also provided some measure of the intensity of a bushfire from the way it had burnt.

"Authorities can also check the results of their firefighting operations," Mr Gray said. "The pictures indicate the relative effectiveness of backburning and other preventive measures.

Holding the line...



• AFP members at Perth's HMAS Stirling take a firm hand with persistent demonstrators who stormed the Naval base during a recent anti-nuclear protest. — See story Page 5.

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THREE FROM FAMILY FIND FUTURE IN THE FORCE

Brothers share a first

Early in 1961 Brian Johnson left behind the noisy, often grimy world of boilermaking, little realising he'd begin a family tradition unique in the AFP.

Within four years two of his three brothers had followed him from their trades into the world of law enforcement.

The brothers Johnson — Brian, Danny and Michael — are the only three brothers in the force.

Initially Brian, 47, currently a detective Sergeant with Interpol, joined the New South Wales Police, as he puts it, "for security".

Seven-and-a-half years later Brian left policing to once more use his tradesmen's qualifications. But policing was in his blood and on 22 October 1973, he joined the then Commonwealth Police. Michael followed in 1974 and Danny two years later.

Both Michael and Danny also were tradesmen, Michael a boiler-maker too and Danny a licensed plumber and gasfitter.

Said Brian: "I suppose I must have put the idea into their head of



• Michael (extreme left), Brian (centre inset) and Danny Johnson ... the only brotherly trio in the AFP.

becoming policemen, but I'm not sure it's entirely attributable to me. You'd better ask them."

Brian admits that his return to policing, in plainclothes, also brought a period of rapid promotion and he attained the rank of First Class Sergeant in a little over two years.

Then it was a transfer from NSW for the first of Brian's two stints (a combined period of nearly six years) in Darwin, the second one ending towards the end of 1983 when he joined Interpol.

Darwin, where he twice acted as Inspector, brought mostly good memories, said Brian. There were busy times, among the busiest being the arrival of the numerous Vietnamese refugee boats, demonstrations against the American B-52 bombers and the first arrest of overseas fishermen for fishing illegally in Australian waters.

Michael, in contrast, is a member of the AFP support group in Sydney to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr Ian Temby, a group that teams with specialist taxation lawyers and accountants.

"The media uses the term 'bottom of the harbour-schemes,' said Michael "It's a deep-seated practice but still a minefield operationally."

"To give you an example, just recently we arrested and charged 10 businessmen. The amount of tax involved is alleged to be \$60 million."

"It's a specialised but highly rewarding area," said Michael, already a Detective Sergeant and an applicant for the next Station Sergeant's course to be held in Canberra.

And Danny? Detective Senior Constable Danny Johnson is a member of Eastern Region's Major Crime Squad after a career in various capacities in the ACT and Eastern Region.

Like Brian we came in for security and a life-time career, which we've got," said Danny.

And with 10 children between them, have any of the offspring shown an interest in police work?

In brief, "No." And the fourth — and eldest — brother? "No," said Brian, "he wants to remain a boiler-maker."

Fire Probe

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"In Victoria and the Northern Territory, country fire authorities are working with satellite pictures in the measurement of build-up of flammable material on forest floors.

"This enables them to take precautions ahead of time with some degree of success," he said.

Mr Gray said new high resolution satellites soon to come into operation would help even more.

Where present satellites provided 80-metre resolution, the new US ones would reduce this to areas 30 metres square.

The AFP's scientific research expert, Dr Malcolm Hall, said there was a lot to be learned from satellite pictures.

"We already use them fairly extensively in the location of illegal drug plantations," he said.

Dr Hall said he was working closely with Dr Peter Thatcher, of Melbourne, who specialised in causes of fires.

"We previously provided Landsat images to Dr Thatcher on a fire in Victoria," he said.

"Dr Thatcher had flown over the scene in a light aircraft at the time of the fires. But it wasn't until he had studied the satellite images that he was able to establish that there had actually been two fires in the area, not one."

Dr Hall said he would be consulting with Dr Thatcher on information to be gained from the Queanbeyan satellite pictures.

NAVY MAN TO WORK WITH CPU

A former Navy patrol boat skipper is to train observers for the charter company which will carry out Coastwatch work.

He is Mr Ian Gibson, who took up a position with the Department of Transport in February.

Mr Gibson, formerly a Lieutenant-Commander, will work alongside the Coastal Protection Unit based in Darwin. His title is Senior Resource Surveillance Officer.

The Darwin officer-in-charge of the Coastal Protection Unit, Inspector John Deeks, said he welcomed Mr Gibson's appointment.

Inspector Deeks said his experience on patrol boats will be invaluable.

Mr Gibson commanded two boats — an old Attack class and a Fremantle class boat.

He was the officer-in-charge of a Grumman Tracker detachment which searched for Vietnamese boat people and for foreign fishing incursions.

Mr Gibson flew 153 Seawatch sorties, so his experience has been welcomed by both the AFP officers involved, and the Transport Department.

Apart from training people, he will be responsible for liaison be-



• Lieutenant-Commander Ian Gibson. Between the police and the department.



• AFP members on duty at Melbourne Airport for the open weekend.

Display at airport attracts 130,000

More than 130,000 people attended an open weekend at Melbourne Airport, at which the AFP was among a wide range of services called on to provide assistance.

The public display of airport activities was organised after a request by Victoria's 150th Anniversary Committee.

Organisation of the display was in the hands of airport management, airlines, emergency services and Keilor Rotary Club which provided ground service facilities.

A charge of \$3 for adult visitors was levied, with the excess after expenses to be directed to community organisations.

The Federal Police role included police response within the display area and arrangements for 24-hour security of exhibits.

Victoria Police were given responsibility for vehicular traffic control within the airport to enable better co-ordination on the approach routes.

The general public made the most of the opportunity to inspect a range of aircraft from ultra light planes to commercial jets, including a Boeing 747. Other displays included RAAF aircraft, hot air balloons, vintage cars, parachuting and aerobatics.

Despite the volume of people that attended, little call was made on the police services for other than lost children.

Although financial aspects have not yet been finalised after payment of costs of about \$120,000 sufficient money will be available to provide two flying scholarships for members of the Air Training Corps. The Corp's 180 members provided invaluable assistance in supervising vehicle parking, securing airport operational perimeters and a static security presence at many display stands.

The amount of funds to go to other organisations is yet to be determined.