



WHEN Detective Inspector Mike Lacey took up the post as the AFP's Liaison Officer in Jakarta, the first thing he had to do was come to terms with the size of his beat.

Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago. It consists of 13,667 islands covering a distance from east to west of 5,150km.

Its 165 million inhabitants make it the fifth most populous nation in the world.

And Mike Lacey has responsibility for covering it all.

A complicating factor for him is that Indonesia, unlike Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong, does not have a background as a British colony with a consequent wide usage of English.

"For a Liaison Officer in Indonesia, it is essential to be able to speak Bahasa Indonesia, the national language," Mike said. "Most of my liaison work involves dealing with Indonesians, few of whom speak English fluently."

Getting around his beat naturally involves a good deal of travel for Mike. There are regular visits to Bali and twice a year trips to Medan and Banda Aceh, in North Sumatra. Mike must also keep an ear, if not an eye, on the multitude of other small centres in the region.

Jakarta was the third of the Australian Federal Police liaison posts to be established, being set up in 1979 by the former Federal Bureau of Narcotics. The office is staffed by Mike and his clerical assistant Johanne Ferguson.

Most liaison work in Jakarta is done with the Indonesian National Police, and to a lesser extent with Customs, Immigration, Coastguard and harbourmasters throughout Indonesia.

"Being a national police force makes it easier to gain access to

areas of interest to the AFP than it would if there were several different police agencies," Mike said. "The structure of the force at present is that of a staff command establishment, although this structure is to be changed in the near future to one of a directorate establishment. Although the police force is part of the Armed Forces, its methods of operation are similar to other Western-style civilian police forces.

"The legal system is different in that it is a mixture of Dutch and Indonesian legal practices which do not have a jury system in criminal trials, but instead have a panel of judges," Mike said.

Indonesia is beginning to experience a drug abuse problem and is at present conducting a national anti-drug campaign. While its drug laws are not as harsh as those in Singapore or Malaysia, where the death penalty is mandatory for possession of a prescribed amount of narcotics, it does have provision for the death penalty under certain circumstances. During the past year the courts throughout Indonesia have been increasing jail sentences for narcotic offences involving both Indonesian and foreign nationals, including Australians, Mike said.

Liaison work in Indonesia, as in most posts, involves much time in the office putting into writing all the information received and requested. Time also is spent with the Narcotics Operations Command and Interpol at police headquarters.

On the regular visits to Bali, close liaison has been established with the Police, Customs and Immigration, and Mike assists these authorities with information about Australian criminals and suspects involved in drug trafficking there. Mike also has given lectures on narcotics to local police, Customs and Immigration officers.



Detective Inspector Mike Lacey with Chief of Narcotics Sub-Directorate and Crime Laboratories, Brig. Gen. Karpono at Police HQ discussing narcotic operational matters.

As in Malaysia, Asian syndicates have become involved in drug trafficking in Indonesia. It has been used as a transit country for shipments of narcotics to the United States, Europe and Australia.

"To combat this trafficking, it is vital that we maintain a reciprocal exchange of information with the Indonesian authorities," Mike said. "This can only be done if investigators in Australia make sure information they obtain on people or syndicates involved in Indonesia is reported to the International Division which can inform the liaison post."

Mike said an officer arriving in Jakarta for the first time must allow at least six months to settle in. This enables a family to adjust to foreign living and to the different work environment.

"Jakarta has a population of 7 million," he said. "The climate is tropical with a temperature range of 25 to 35 degrees Celsius. During November to April, the wet season brings high humidity."

The road system in the city has to cater for some 1 million vehicles and traffic conditions are such that most people at the Embassy find it easier to employ a driver.

Living conditions are reasonable by South East Asian standards. The country has a stable economy and currency and although services such as electricity and water are sometimes unpredictable, telephone services are adequate. Most Embassy houses have a day and night jaga (watchman) whose salary is covered by allowance.

"The houses are air conditioned and are of good standard," Mike said.

Joyce Lacey, Mike's wife, is helped in the house by a cook and a servant. She finds this assistance necessary when entertaining officially at home.

She has found that shopping is reasonable in Jakarta.

"There are major supermarkets throughout the city which stock most of the items available in Australia," she said. "The prices are higher than in Australia but allowances cover it. The Embassy has a canteen which airfreights Australian foodstuffs such as dairy products, fresh fruit, frozen meats and a limited amount of grocery items which normally cannot be bought locally.

"There are several departmental stores and shopping centres which offer a whole range of goods similar to those available in Australia. The range of clothing is not as varied as in Australia and larger sizes in dresses, shirts and trousers are hard to obtain as readymades. However, the cost of tailoring and dressmaking is cheap in Jakarta," Joyce said.

Schooling in Jakarta is rather restricted for English-speaking students. There is one British school which caters for primary school students only. A second school, the Jakarta International School (JIS), follows the US curriculum and takes children from kindergarten to the equivalent of Australia's Grade 12.

"Most Australian Embassy children attend this school," Joyce said. "It has excellent facilities including a school theatre recently completed at a cost of \$US 3 million, experienced teachers — mainly American but with some Australians — and has a very good reputation. School buses are provided for all students."

The Lacey's have both their children, Jenny, 15, and Simon, 10, at JIS.

Jenny finds the school very different.

"When I started at JIS, making friends was very easy because of the orientation activities which provide for new students to be shown around and introduced to other students," Jenny said.

"I found there are a lot more activities during and after school than we used to have in Australia. The system allows you to work at your own pace, instead of having to keep up with each other as in Australia. Teachers have more time for individual help because classes never have more than 25 students.

"More subjects are taught. The only subject that was hard to get used to was English. The American system uses a lot more grammar than the Australian system," Jenny said.

Both Mike and Joyce agree that for families thinking of serving overseas, especially in the South East Asian area, it is essential that they are able to adapt to the local environment and the different customs. However, they and the children have found the posting rewarding both professionally and socially.



Australian Embassy in Jakarta.