

# HEAD OF ROYAL THAI POLICE VISITS AFP

by Philip Castle

**T**HE head of the Royal Thai Police, General Narong Mahanonda, visited the AFP from 17 to 19 February as the guest of the Commissioner, Major General Ronald Grey. This was his first official visit to Australia.

After his stay in Brisbane, Sydney and Canberra, General Narong also made an official visit to New Zealand.

General Narong said that the Royal Thai Police had about 140,000 members making it one of the world's largest police forces. It has a wide range of functions including that of guarding Thailand's borders which required a number of battalions of police officers. It supervised immigration matters and other internal security aspects.

General Narong, who is 61, suffered a serious gun wound during some student unrest in Bangkok in the mid 1970s at the King Mongku's Technology Institute at Nonthaburi.

He was then Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.

He said he had gone to the area where the students were rioting to try to calm them.

'The students were fighting each other and I went to try to help and improve the morale of my men,' he said describing the incident. 'It got very rough and one of the students shot at me. I received a bullet wound to the neck. A reporter next to me was shot dead. That can be part of being a police officer...'

He said this was a period of some political and labour unrest in Thailand and was one of the most difficult periods in his police career. He developed some innovative projects to try to overcome some of the problems including having responsible citizens accompany police officers on their rounds as volunteers.

He initiated the Youth Relationship Project concept where slum children were encouraged to feel more responsible for their community and this helped to reduce crime. He was also the first to introduce the recruitment of women into the Police Force.

He began his first training for police work at the Chulachomklao Royal Military School from 1942 to 1945 when he became a Police Sub-Lieutenant. He later studied at the Police Academy in Italy and then at the International Police Academy in Washington, DC, USA. He

served in a number of regions and became a Deputy Director of the Royal Thai Police in 1976 and Director General in 1982. He holds a number of Thai honours.

During his Australian visit he met a number of senior AFP officers and the newly appointed Special Minister of State, Senator Michael Tate. He was the guest of honour at a formal dinner held at the AFP's Barton College on 18 February hosted by Commissioner Grey.

He has a son working as a medical practitioner living in Brisbane whom General Narong visited while in Australia.

## Friendship important

General Narong said that he regarded the friendship between the two Police Forces as extremely important and he had appreciated the warm welcome given to him and his party particularly from Commissioner Grey. The Royal Thai Police Force appreciated the help given

to it and particularly the scholarships the AFP provided and the Australian Government's computer project used by the narcotics police, customs and immigration officers to fight illegal drugs. He wanted to thank the AFP and the Australian Government.

He said the fight in Thailand against illegal drugs was a big one but some victories were being seen. The community often cooperated with the police and recently a suspicious trader alerted Thai Police to a syndicate sending heroin to the Netherlands. The tip-off led to more than 120 kilograms of heroin being seized.

He said Australians were well liked in Thailand and their tourism was encouraged. But any visitor had to remember that the laws had to be obeyed. There were big signs at the airport which warned visitors about dealing in illegal drugs and the offence could bring serious penalties. Drugs were a world-wide problem and the international police forces had to work together to fight them. This was happening between Australia and Thailand. ●



Commissioner Ron Grey greets Thai police chief General Narong Mahanonda on his arrival for the official dinner at AFP College, Barton.