

# Overseas Role

**On 'Day One' in 1979, the AFP had four liaison posts overseas, inherited from the Commonwealth Police and the Federal Bureau of Narcotics.**

Today, as an indication of just how seriously the international implications of Australian crime and criminals are viewed, 22 AFP Overseas Liaison Officers are operating at 14 posts throughout the world.

And the demand for reliable information about overseas criminal activities grows day by day.

Much of the crime which infects Australian society has its wellsprings overseas, and much of our 'home grown' crime has itself spread overseas to infect and harm other societies.

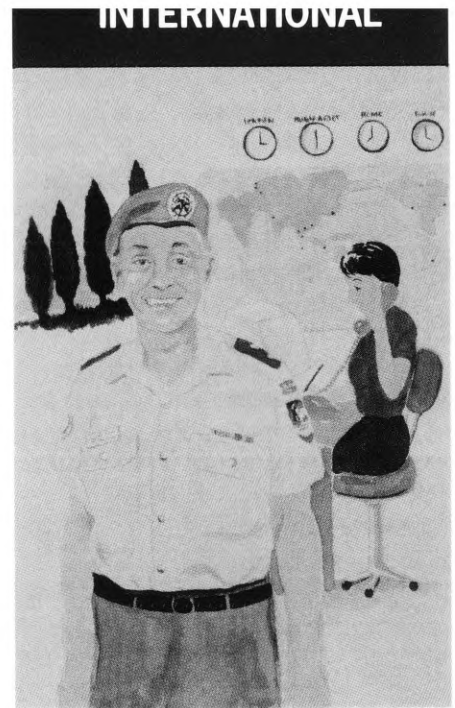
Depending on how strongly organised the criminals are, criminal activities in Australia may actually be controlled from

overseas and vice versa. Drug traffickers and other organised criminals despise every sort of national and international rule: money, drugs, goods and the criminals themselves cross and re-cross international boundaries regularly. Events overseas can strongly affect crimes committed here.

It is not possible to obtain reliable information about overseas activities from a distance and the AFP requires information that is particularly accurate and prompt. Other organisations have their own priorities and with the best will in the world cannot know the AFP's needs as well as it does. There is no satisfactory alternative than to be there itself.

## Staffing needs

The AFP's earliest posts were in Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Jakarta, formerly manned by Narcotics Bureau officers,



and in London, where a Commonwealth Police senior officer was attached to the London Metropolitan Police (New Scotland Yard).

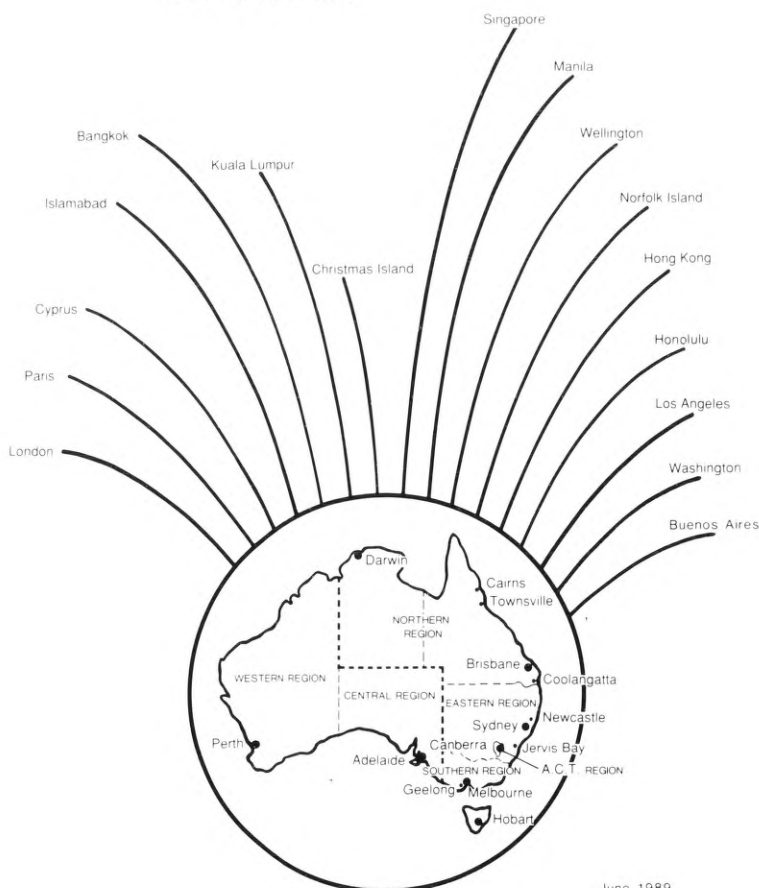
Eleven more were opened in the intervening years, in Wellington, Los Angeles, Washington, Manila, Hong Kong, Islamabad, the South Pacific, Singapore, Honolulu, Nicosia and Buenos Aires. In 1987, the Jakarta post was closed in the light of greater staffing needs elsewhere in the international network.

Today, the 14 posts are carefully placed to be of maximum operational benefit to the AFP. The South Pacific 'post' is actually located in Headquarters in Canberra.

AFP Liaison Officers operate under special guidelines which determine their roles. They do not perform traditional police investigative functions; such functions are rightfully performed by the local police in the host country. Neither do they engage in surveillance or undercover work of any kind.

The guidelines require the liaison officer to maintain close contact with local police and other law enforcement agencies of the host country, to promote a relationship of mutual trust and to keep up a flow of vital information to Australian Police Forces. They also request local agencies to undertake inquiries on behalf of Australian law enforcement bodies, keep an eye out for ideas and improvements in police practice which might be useful to the AFP and to provide — where appropriate and only if requested — training and technical advice.

Australian Federal Police  
LOCATION MAP



Because of the demands of such a role, it takes particular skills to be an effective AFP liaison officer. The duties are unlike those that most AFP members are used to, even though wider police experience is vital to the performance of liaison duties.

In particular, they must be able to decide what information will be useful to Australia, they must keep track of criminal investigations and law enforcement news in at least two countries, and they must know which local agencies will be able to provide the required information.

For many years, the overseas liaison network was administered from within Drug Operations Division by the Overseas Liaison Branch (OLIA). Being a small part of Drug Operations meant that the Branch had a strongly operational role. OLIA itself played a part in acting on information received from the overseas posts.

As the size and complexity of the overseas network grew, this arrangement proved impossible to maintain, and it became plain that a unit needed to be formed which would deal exclusively with the AFP's overseas activities. The new unit needed to support the growing network both administratively and operationally, but could not be part of Drug Operations and should become less involved in the actual conduct of investigations.

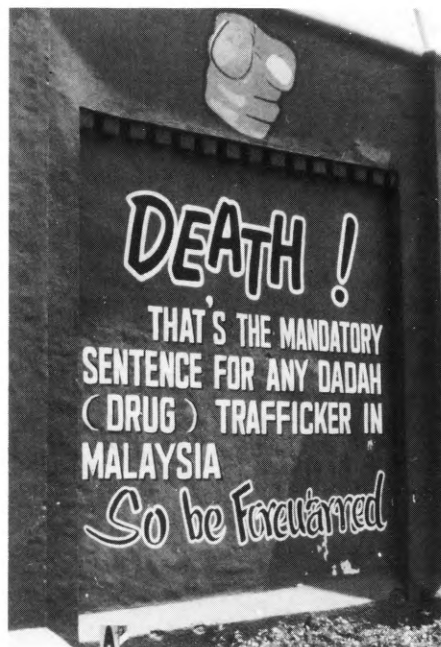
### Role Evolved

International Division came into being in 1984 and is now affectionately referred to as Internat. A quote from 'Platypus' of December 1984 reveals the functions International Division acquired:

"The new International Division has been placed under the control of the Office of Commissioner of Police. OLIA was part of the Investigations Department.

"Through the Chief of Staff, the Division not only takes over the functions of OLIA, but also the administration of the AFP representation on Cyprus and Christmas and Norfolk Islands; the administrative arrangements, on behalf of the Commissioner, of Interpol's National Central Bureau; and the arrangements for all overseas visits to and from the AFP, including the direction of program content and administrative detail."

In the years since then, the role and management of International have evolved considerably. It no longer comes under the Office of the Commissioner (which has been abolished), and is again



A sign in Malaysia indicates just how serious the threat of drugs is regarded.

to be found in Investigations Department, although as a separate division. It no longer administers the Interpol National Central Bureau, Christmas Island or Norfolk Island.

Some things have not changed. International is still responsible for the operational and administrative support of the AFP's growing overseas network, still administers the AFP's Cyprus contingents, and still co-ordinates visits to and from Australia, with the assistance of the Overseas Movements Section.

Activities in the major posts involve:

**London** — Presently three members are stationed here; two attached to the Australian High Commission with responsibility for liaison with the UK, Ireland, France, Spain, the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany. The other officer is attached to the National Drug Intelligence Unit in New Scotland Yard. The work largely centres on fraud, white-collar crime, Australian fugitives in Europe and drug trafficking.

**Los Angeles** — Two members are at present stationed here, dealing largely with the Australian impact of US organised crime, drug inquiries and Australian fugitives. Responsibility covers the Western US, Western Canada and Mexico.

**Washington** — Until recently it was responsible for the South American continent and was a two-man post. Establishment of the new post at Buenos

Aires has reduced it to a one-member post, with responsibility for Eastern US and Eastern Canada. Major functions are to liaise with the FBI and the Drug Enforcement Administration, as well as other Federal US law enforcement bodies.

**Nicosia** — Staffed by one member whose activities concern drugs originating in Lebanon and with responsibility for Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt.

**South Pacific** — This officer, based in Canberra, maintains liaison with the island nations of the South Pacific, making regular visits to the region on intelligence gathering and monitoring the flow of narcotics to Australia through the area.

**Buenos Aires** — The most recent post, established in April this year, is the first in South America and reflects the growing importance of cocaine as a drug law enforcement problem in Australia. It is staffed by one member, with a second planned in the near future.

**Wellington** — Staffed by one member, attached to the National Drugs Intelligence Bureau in NZ Police Headquarters.

**South-East Asia** — Ten liaison officers are stationed through the region, in Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Manila and Hong Kong. The 'Golden Triangle' of Northern Thailand, Laos and Myanmar (Burma) is the source of 70 per cent of the heroin consumed in Australia, and narcotics occupy the vast bulk of the liaison work in the region. Other activities concern money laundering and major fraud.

**Islamabad** — Two members are currently stationed here, working on narcotics trafficking from the countries of the 'Golden Crescent' of the Middle East, including cannabis from Lebanon and heroin from Pakistan.

**Honolulu** — Manned by one member, whose work mainly deals with fraud, Australian fugitives in Western US and narcotics trafficking.

The existence of the Overseas Liaison Officers means that the AFP and similar bodies, both State and Federal, are able to gain access to information they could not otherwise have. This means, in turn, that greater amounts of evidence can be accumulated about known criminals.

The end result is that the AFP is much more effective in its fight against drug trafficking and other organised crime at home, cutting deeper and deeper into criminal networks.