

The bizarre was common place

"Many of the situations we often found ourselves in, partly compensated for this frustration," Superintendent Cox said.

"Like the elderly man who collapsed in the street.

"When police arrived, the local undertaker and helpers were just lifting him into a coffin. When examined by an Australian IPM he was found to have a pulse. By the time he was conveyed to the hospital (a misnomer) he had made a remarkable recovery. I can only imagine his surprise and horror if he had woken up in the coffin.

"One of the more bizarre incidents was when Detective Constable Sharon McTavish was confronted by a complainant who claimed he had captured a 'vampire' who had tried to suck the blood from a child's neck. She was later led to a woman who had been bound, dragged along the road and severely beaten. The complainant maintained that the woman flew around at night, often landing on roof tops.

Superintendent Cox said one of the most interesting matters he came across was a murder investigation.

A man was alleged to have two wives. How that occurred had not been established, but one wife became jealous of the other and conspired with another party to murder her. She agreed to pay \$300 Haitian dollars

(about \$130 Australian) to commit the crime. To ensure it was done properly she agreed to pay an extra H\$3 to have the machete sharpened. The killing was committed but a dispute arose when the murderer went to collect his payment and was only paid H\$5 (about A\$2).

Austere life style

The contingent was housed in the largest hotel in the area which had 15 bedrooms made up of eight singles and seven doubles and making for very cramped and frustrating conditions. With no entertainment in the town and little to do, a video borrowed from a passing helicopter or landing craft was most welcome.

"Our regular social activity was to go to the beach about 6km away," Superintendent Cox said.

"There was an acute water shortage. I became very adept at having a shower using two or three 1.5 litre water bottles. Toilet flushing was a luxury and only done at times of necessity or once a day, whichever was the least. Our meals improved greatly with the employment of a local chef. The hotel staff were sacked by Dyncorp who had been contracted to supply us with meals," he said.

Regardless of the quality of the catering, and the other day-to-day difficulties, most contingent members said that they returned to Australia better officers for the experience.

Haiti mission from the Commander's perspective



Our mission was to monitor and mentor the interim police force in Jeremie. We did this through joint patrolling in and around Jeremie as well as visiting outlying towns and villages in the Grand Anse region. Additional classroom training by members of the contingent reinforced the initial six days training all Haitian police received.

By the time the Australians left, the general population had come to recognise that the police were there to help. The image of the Army as the enforcement arm of the current dictator was reduced significantly. The old Army headquarters building was re-painted and turned into a police station. One goal we were unable to achieve was to deploy police to smaller towns and villages in the Grand Anse region. This, however, was to be pursued by the UN police contingent that assumed control of Jeremie as we left. It is hoped they will be successful, as the majority of crime in the is region occurs outside Jeremie where there was no law and order.

The problems brought about by non payment of salary to interim police, poor living conditions and doubts as to their future, made our task more difficult. Nevertheless, I believe we achieved as much as we could have in the time we were in Haiti.

— A. H. Bird, Commander



T. Browne

The families of the Haiti Contingent members managed to collect more than 2000 items of clothing which were forwarded to Haiti. Pre-dispatch sorting was done at the GPPAD offices at the Weston complex.