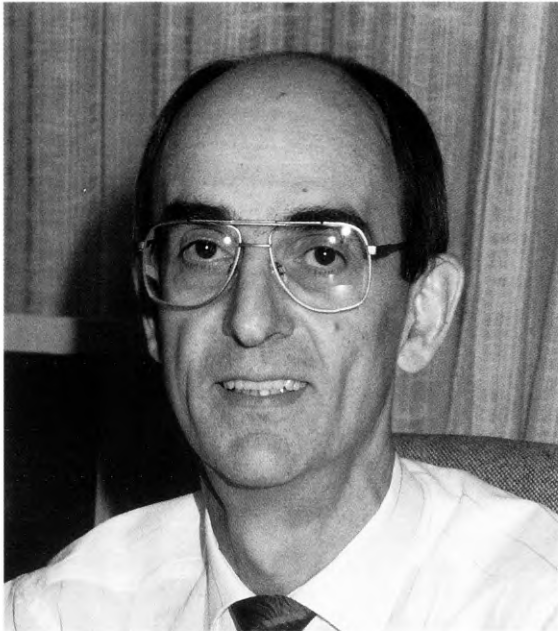


Isolation no longer a natural security buffer against trans-national crime



David Schramm
Director, International

The international focus of the AFP has played a major role in the organisation's development.

David Schramm, Director International, says that the AFP's international interests are not widely understood outside of the AFP.

"There is a need to educate people about the impact which national and international criminal activity can have on regional and national security interests and the importance of the law enforcement role," he said.

"Supporting police investigations and exchanging international criminal intelligence will continue to be a major role, but the AFP can also make a very positive contribution in other areas, such as improving human rights in developing countries through the provision of community-based police training".

The AFP role in counteracting emerging criminal trends was the topic of an address, prepared by International, and delivered by Commissioner Palmer to a meeting of the Australian Institute of International Affairs in Canberra recently.

As an island continent geographically remote from many of the troubled parts of the globe Australia has, over the years, enjoyed relative protection from much of the political and social turmoil which has affected many countries.

Traditionally the threat to Australia has been measured in terms of political events in and around the Asia-Pacific region and our capacity to respond to the threat in terms of our defence capability.

The end of the Cold War and the transformation in world politics has caused academics and policy makers to reassess the future. While most agree that conventional security threats remain relevant, a host of new security issues are emerging to share the international spotlight.

Among the issues moving increasingly into sharper focus is the breakdown in law and order occurring in many countries, the most notable probably that being experienced in the countries of the former USSR, and its impact internationally.

Additionally, the emergence of transnational crime, the escalation of international drug trafficking, and evidence of corruption at high levels of government are now emerging as threats to national, regional and international stability.

Over recent decades economic changes have profoundly influenced international relations. The emergence of regional economic trading groups have drawn countries, often with different cultural and political backgrounds, into economic and political alliances. The benefits of participating in a global economy are considerable and, like the corporate business world, criminal organisations have taken advantage of the new opportunities.

There is increasing evidence that some criminal organisations, particularly those involved in drug trafficking, have reorganised their activities to resemble multi-national corporations. Strategic alliances have been established, profits shared and territory split as is demonstrated by the existence of arrangements between Colombian cartels, the Sicilian Mafia and the recently emerged but increasingly relevant Russian Mafia. Similarly, within South East Asia closer relationships now exist between Thai and Vietnamese drug traffickers and between the Japanese Baryokudan (or Yakuza) and Chinese triads.

The depth and extent of such relationships tends to depend on the mutual benefits these present but it is clear that while such arrangements remain profitable they will continue.

Australia can no longer consider its crime problem to be largely domestic in nature and localised in its manifestation. No longer are we an isolated continent which enjoys natural protection; the pace of change has drawn us inextricably into the

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'global village'. If Australia is to reap the benefits of being economically competitive then we must be prepared to protect the very environment which allows us to be competitive, namely our economic and social structure. Both areas are open to exploitation by criminal activity unless we are vigilant.

One only has to look to our nearest neighbours to the north, Papua New Guinea, where the Government has declared 1996 as 'the year of law and order'. The potential breakdown in law and order poses the biggest single threat to that country's economic development and political stability, despite the fact that Australia is providing \$68 million in direct law enforcement assistance under a current five year AUSAid program.

In the Pacific Island countries, many of which have fragile economies, the threat posed by so-called 'carpetbaggers' – those who offer governments ultra-attractive financial investment deals – is well documented. With the estimation that the illicit drug trade in Australia is worth \$A1.2 - 2 billion per year, it is not difficult to imagine the damage which could be inflicted on the economies of some of the Pacific

Island countries with just a small percentage investment of illicitly generated funds.

It is therefore very much in Australia's interests to help protect the political and economic structures of countries in the Asia-Pacific region from the threat of criminal interests.

While this represents a significant proportion of the problems facing Australia, attention must also be given to the threat from criminal elements of the 'home grown' variety. A range of criminal activity within Australia is increasingly being described as 'organised crime'. The term itself is the subject of controversy and debate as there is no internationally accepted definition of what exactly constitutes organised crime.

Regardless of how one might define the activity, evidence shows that criminal groups are increasingly well-organised, more sophisticated in their methods and more national and international in their approach.

The changes in the nature of criminal activity and community expectations means that traditional law enforcement methods are to a great extent, obsolete. Law enforcement must be more professional, innovative, and skilled, and effective law enforcement must be backed with effective legislation. Apart from operating 'smarter', probably the single most important factor in law enforcement today is the need for co-operation. At a time when criminals really know no bounds, law enforcement, which operates very much within jurisdictional constraints, must adopt new strategies. This is happening increasingly and the face of law enforcement in Australia has changed dramatically in recent years. Many of these changes are still occurring - as illustrated by the current Royal Commission into the NSW Police Service and the restructuring of various police services.

International countermeasures

Co-operation at the international level is now essential. The AFP, as the Commonwealth's primary law enforcement agency, gives high priority to enhancing Australia's law enforcement capacity at the



The AFP's international interests include combating organised crime, particularly drug trafficking.

international level. Much of the organisation's activities support Commonwealth interests, but increasingly state police services are also reaching into the international arena through the various AFP networks.

The AFP's international interests fall into a wide range of areas including peacekeeping, international agency co-operation such as drug control programs, INTERPOL, and overseas development assistance, as well as core business activities such as combating organised crime (particularly that involving drug trafficking), and major fraud against the Commonwealth. It also supports the activities of other law enforcement agencies including the National Crime Authority (NCA).

Integral to the successful functioning of these responsibilities is the liaison officer network which comprises 29 liaison officers based in 13 countries ranging from the UK through to South America with most in South East Asia. They are located in Thailand, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, The Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Pakistan, Cyprus,

Italy, London, USA and Argentina.

These officers provide a vital link, both in supporting investigational demands from Australian law enforcement agencies, and in providing criminal intelligence on international criminal groups targeting Australia. The liaison officer network is making a growing contribution to Australia's broader strategic law enforcement interests, through its contribution to AFP international criminal intelligence assessments. These are fed into the Office of Strategic Crime Assessments (OSCA) as part of the law enforcement policy development process.

AFP liaison officers are attached to Australian diplomatic missions, carry diplomatic or consular status, and do not undertake direct operational activity. They rely on co-operation from the host country law enforcement agencies and an essential function is fostering good working relationships and creating a climate which allows Australian law enforcement interests to be properly addressed. This in itself can be a challenge as many other countries

AFP international liaison posts



The AFP has liaison officers in 13 countries and a Pacific Region officer based in Canberra.

have recognised the value of police liaison officers and in some locations there is strong competition for local resources.

The challenge for the AFP is to ensure that our international representation reflects contemporary law enforcement priorities. A number of the South East Asian posts were established primarily to counter the trafficking of heroin and cannabis. In recent years we have established liaison links with Italy to combat Italo-Australian crime, and South America to meet the threat posed by cocaine.

Our role is proactive wherever possible to meet emerging threats and as such we are currently considering proposals to open a post in Vietnam and, with the return of Hong Kong to

the Peoples' Republic of China, also in Beijing.

One of the best examples of the importance of international co-operation and the role of our liaison network was an operation which concluded successfully recently. It involved a highly-organised group of Australian criminals known to law enforcement agencies for many years, in a range of criminal activity including drug trafficking.

The complex operation, lasting more than two years, established that the group contracted a vessel in Europe to travel to the coast of Pakistan where it took on a large quantity of cannabis resin. The consignment was taken to a point in French waters off New Caledonia where part of it was transferred at sea

and imported into Australia by a fishing vessel. The remainder was concealed on the sea bed when the vessel was taken to a remote seaport in Papua New Guinea to be repaired.

Close co-operation with agencies in the UK, Holland, various Gulf states, Pakistan, the USA, Uruguay, Papua New Guinea and New Caledonia resulted in 26 people being arrested, including four who were extradited from Papua New Guinea. More than \$2 million worth of property was restrained, the vessels seized and a total of 15 tonnes of cannabis resin recovered. This operation could not have succeeded without the ability to marshal the collective resource of law enforcement agencies throughout the world.

As well as being an example of the importance of co-operation, operations such as this are indicative of the direction in which law enforcement is evolving at the international level.

Increasing use is being made of both formal and informal networks in the fight against transnational crime. Bilateral treaties on mutual assistance are being used increasingly to allow investigations, and evidence gathering, to be undertaken in one country on behalf of another. Law enforcement agencies are increasingly working in a co-ordinated manner at the international level and just as we have had considerable success in Australia through the use of multi-jurisdictional task forces, the climate is developing where we will see increasing use made of international task forces to combat multi-national crime. Such action will, however, demand considerable political will for issues such as jurisdictional limitations, national sovereignty, extradition laws and intelligence sharing to be overcome.

The AFP believes it is essential to assist the police services of countries in the South West Pacific region to be aware of, and combat crime. The organisation therefore maintains a South Pacific Islands Liaison Officer who regularly visits countries of the regions to encourage both police and regulatory agencies to be alert to potential problems.

Requests to check prospective investors are now commonplace.

The AFP also acts as a sub-regional centre for INTERPOL on behalf of Pacific countries, so ensuring they have full access to the world-wide resources of INTERPOL and provides direct investigational support where requested through forensic assistance and expert investigators.

Such assistance helps the police agencies concerned to improve their capacity to combat exploitation by criminal interests and provides Australia with the necessary 'early warning system' to identify threats to regional security.

Development assistance

While the provision of direct assistance is important in supporting Australia's shorter-term law-enforcement interests, there is also a need to look to more permanent solutions to the problem of transnational crime. Criminal enterprises are continually seeking to exploit situations where opportunity is high and risk low and countries which have ineffective criminal justice systems are more likely to become havens for organised crime.

It is in Australia's interests, therefore to encourage, support and, where practical, provide direct assistance to countries to improve their criminal justice systems. Overlapping this is the broader issue of human rights and the involvement of law enforcement in some countries in human rights violations. Encouragement of the development of criminal justice systems which embrace the notion of community policing is essential if meaningful and lasting steps forward are to be taken in the field of human rights.

In countries where police forces are either para-military or even part of the military, change will not come easily. But there is a move for change. Perhaps the best example is the Philippine National Police which is undergoing a major civilianisation process and seeking to become more of a community-based police service.

Countries such as the Philippines are looking to Australia to provide training and while the AFP has given some assistance it does not have a budget for international training and

law enforcement and so has to compete with other interests for the scarce civilian aid dollar.

Crime, law and order, and law enforcement impact on such a range of international issues that they now demand consideration in the context of foreign policy development.

The USA now links its foreign policy and development assistance to a country's demonstrated commitment to the fight against organised crime and drug trafficking.

Future challenges

As the global economy grows and as Australia's participation in it increases, international borders will become even more blurred. The Sydney 2000 Olympics and the growth of tourism generally will place increasing pressure on our border controls.

The Joint Standing Committee on Migration took note recently of law enforcement concerns in reaching its decision to not recommend visa free arrangements during the Olympics. More stream-lined systems will be necessary and the challenge for law enforcement will be to implement procedures which combat transnational crime interests affecting Australia, without adversely impacting on the economic benefits which streamlined visa controls allow.

We must expect that the profits from transnational crime will continue to create a demand to launder money. Many countries have introduced effective money laundering legislation but too many are still vulnerable to exploitation. As long as weak links exist in the chain of international controls, the efforts of the international community will be blunted.

We must continue in our efforts to convince countries, particularly in the Asian region, that their economies are at risk if they do not take the necessary steps to counter money laundering.

In this regard the work of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), established in 1989 by the G7 nations to develop strategies against money laundering, has been significant. Its membership has expanded considerably and Australia has played an active role in developing a model framework for countries to counter the problem.

Australia's contribution to FATF

interests in the Asian region included establishing an Asian Money Laundering Secretariat, based at the NCA in Sydney. The role of the secretariat is to promote adoption of anti-money-laundering legislation and controls by countries of the region. Significantly, and perhaps somewhat ironically, the secretariat was funded for its first three years from the Confiscated Assets Trust Fund, which represent the proceeds of crime.

Australia is seen increasingly by Asia Pacific countries as a leader in law enforcement. More countries are turning to Australia for advice, training and assistance rather than more traditional sources, as we are generally viewed as being more acceptable and relevant to the region.

The AFP is expected to support the fight against crime in Australia through the provision of positive and timely information to all Australian law enforcement agencies. Similarly, there will be an increasing demand for intelligence assessments on transnational crime issues in the formulation of national and international policy.

We must strengthen our international strategic alliances, both at the multi-lateral level through the International Criminal Police Organisation INTERPOL and the United Nations, and at the bilateral level through the AFP liaison officer network.

To be successful we must be proactive and effectively monitor the international criminal environment, identifying trends which have the potential to impact directly, or indirectly, on Australia.

Law enforcement, like so many other areas of the public sector, is going through major change, much of it difficult. The future prospects for the AFP are exciting. Never before has law enforcement been so internationally relevant and the opportunities this presents are only beginning to be recognised.

The problems of international crime will continue to increase in complexity and the forces required to combat this phenomenon will demand innovative and far reaching policies. We are equal to that challenge and through the enhancement of our international efforts, the 'long arm' of the law will become significantly longer.