

A new network in the Pacific



The AFP, through its Law Enforcement Cooperation Program (LECP), has established the Pacific Transnational Crime Network (TCUs) to combat transnational crime in the wider Pacific region.

This move acknowledges the changing criminal environment, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region where transnational crime and its consequences are of significant law enforcement concern and national security interest.

Since 2002, TCUs have been established in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea in partnership and with the support and agreement of the governments, Police Commissioners and other key law enforcement agencies. The initiative was also supported by the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP)

The TCUs provide a proactive, transnational crime intelligence and investigations capacity in each of the participating countries. Dedicated teams consisting of Police, Customs, and other law enforcement and border protection agencies work closely to proactively develop intelligence and initiate investigations into transnational organised crime threats.

The establishment of the TCUs recognises that the criminal environment in the Pacific region is changing and that the complex nature of criminal activities across borders requires a coordinated regional response.

The primary functions of the TCUs includes collection, collation, analysis and dissemination of tactical intelligence, target development, management of issue specific investigations and establishment of in-country networks in support of their activities. Each TCU has a secure database, secure email system for communications across the network and with all other Pacific Island countries and each team maintains a surveillance and intelligence capability.

As part of the AFP's commitment to working alongside our Pacific Island



Allanrow Banimataku, Team Leader Vanuatu.

partners, extensive training development programs have been run parallel to the TCU program, and have included intelligence, surveillance, operational security and attendance of TCU members on the National Strategic Intelligence Course, Major Investigations Management Workshops, OCSET training and drug investigations programs. Importantly, the TCU network and the AFP have been able to utilise key relationships with the DEA, the Pacific Islands Forum and Interpol to enhance training and capacity development opportunities.

Following the establishment of the TCUs in each country as operational teams, the next stage in the development of the network was the establishment of the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre (PTCCC) in Suva, Fiji in May 2004.

The PTCCC provides a gateway into the network for other law enforcement agencies by acting as a regional one-stop-shop for all law enforcement enquiries. Its major functions are to coordinate the collection, collation and dissemination of intelligence throughout the Pacific Region from Pacific LEA's through the SpIexNet system and to provide intelligence support to other law enforcement agencies.

Links to other law enforcement agencies around the world are further enhanced by the presence of Interpol within the PTCCC and access to the AFP International Network in 27 countries around the world. These links provide the TCU network and Pacific Island countries with the unique ability to access law enforcement information and have enquires undertaken on their behalf in a practical and simplified manner.

The centre also provides capacity building and professional development for Pacific Regional LEAs and in its first 14 months of operation has provided the opportunity for 13 law enforcement officers from Vanuatu, PNG, Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Kiribati Federated States of Micronesia and Cook Islands to undertake short and long-term attachments to work in the centre. In line with its core functions, the PTCCC is staffed by Pacific Law Enforcement Agencies.

The establishment of the PTCCC has been strongly welcomed within the Pacific region, receiving official support from the 2004 Pacific Islands Forum Meeting in Samoa, which released the following statement: "Leaders also welcomed the establishment of the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre in Suva to harness and enhance law enforcement intelligence generated by the national Transnational Crime Units".

The amount of intelligence generated within the network over the past twelve months has resulted in the preparation of 114 intelligence reports, 20 intelligence assessments, 82 completed taskings and three regional intelligence assessments being undertaken.



Clockwise from top left: PNG Team, Team Leader Tonga and Team Leader PTCCC, Commissioner Andy Hughes, TCU team in Tonga

Current intelligence holdings of the TCU Network indicates:

- significant levels of smuggling of dutiable goods (cigarettes, alcohol, prohibited and counterfeit items) affecting revenue collection of PICs
- increased ATS activity within the region including transshipments of pseudoephedrine
- passport/identity fraud being utilised to conduct people smuggling activities
- increasing foreign influence (Asian/Indian) on transnational crime within the region
- indications of child sex offenders visiting the region
- continuing advance fee frauds being perpetrated and
- illegal fishing remains a threat to the region.

The PTCCC is governed by a Board of Management which provides the necessary command, control and coordination arrangements, and is drawn from key stakeholders on a rotational basis.

“The TCU Network provides a truly regional approach to combating the threat of transnational crime in the Pacific Region” Commissioner Hughes, PTCCC Chairman, PICP Chairman 2005, said.

Significant achievements of the TCU network include arrests and convictions in Fiji and overseas (*Operation Outrigger* and *AFP Operation Deva*); arrests and seizures related to illegal fishing, arms smuggling, fraud and dealing with false passports; recommendation to government on legislative changes; dismantling of a clan lab in Nadi resulting in four arrests and seizure of ATS in Australia; recovery of significant

unpaid duties after seizures of undeclared goods and the deportation of COC figures involved in criminal activities in Fiji, PNG and Vanuatu.

“The AFP remains committed to supporting the Pacific Transnational Crime Network and recognises the contribution that the network is making to the ongoing fight against Transnational Crime,” AFP National Manager of Border and International Federal Agent Mike Phelan said.

The logo, which has been designed collaboratively by all members of the Transnational Crime Network, features a kingfisher bird sitting upon a lali, with a palm tree and blue sea in the background.

The kingfisher, a native to the Pacific Islands is renowned for sitting unnoticed, observing in silence, yet sounds an audible warning when danger is imminent. The lali, a Pacific Island drum, is used to summon the community together for a common purpose and supports the vision of working together as one. The palm tree signifies the sustainability of the network through adversity, while the sea signifies the Pacific.