

Policing the neighbourhood and keeping peace in the Pacific

Two years after AFP Commissioner Mick Keelty's launch of the 'Policing the Neighbourhood' research project on Australian police peace-keeping in the Pacific, Assistant Commissioner Paul Jevtovic, National Manager of the AFP's International Deployment Group (IDG) reveals how this joint study¹ is helping to positively shape the future of the group, through an interview with Federal Agent Juani O'Reilly.

Australian policing is changing. In a speech he delivered last year, Commissioner Keelty recognised that the AFP is now operating in a foreign policy as well as a political space.

There are 450 AFP members serving in missions in Cyprus, Solomon Islands, Sudan, Timor-Leste, Nauru, Tonga, Vanuatu, Cambodia and Afghanistan. Their challenge is to maintain law and order and build the capacity of local police services in these diverse and fragmented regions.

The AFP has played a vital role in helping to maintain a safe, stable and secure region in the Pacific since the establishment of the IDG in 2004. It continues this role with the recent appointment of Denis McDermott as Commander Participating Police Force in Solomon Islands in July 2007.

In 2006, the federal government supported IDG with an additional \$493 million to boost staff to 1200 by 2008.

Juani O'Reilly: *Following the additional government funding, can you provide an overview of IDG's Future Strategy and some of the challenges you expect?*

Paul Jevtovic: I don't think there has been a government anywhere in the



Photo by Taryn Doherty

PPF Advisor Ian Bucher with a teacher from White River Community High School, Solomon Islands

world that has provided such a policing commitment in the international context. It has given us the opportunity to think long-term about international policing and allowed us to invest in training for longer periods. It has allowed us to recruit specific skill sets required to deliver our initiatives offshore. The funding has been a fantastic boost to our ability to attract and retain personnel and it allows us to remain competitive in the marketplace with our first phase of recruitment exceeding all expectations.

One of our priorities is the establishment of the Operations Response Group

which will be a tactical and highly-skilled capability in crowd control and riot management with rapid deployment capability, as well as having the infrastructure to support our offshore missions. There are immense opportunities for all to be part of international policing.

Does the IDG have a rapid deployment plan?

PJ: Part of the Futures Strategy was the establishment of an operation planning cell which will work closely with the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and exchange best practice concepts. This



Assistant Commissioner Paul Jevtovic

will ensure consistency in application, thinking and operation planning areas reflecting on-going learning. Through mission reviews, whatever has been effective, or ineffective will be captured. Mistakes are okay, as long as we learn from them and don't repeat them.

Has the 'Policing the Neighbourhood' study influenced the IDG's focus on cultural training?

PJ: Yes. First, the course name has changed to International Deployment Pre-Deployment Training (IDPT) and runs 35 days instead of 15, with three days of mission-specific training. Where the old course concentrated on 'duty of care issues', the new course focuses on capacity development, human rights, and culture and coaching. Other aspects also include language, interoperability with the ADF, command, control and mission orders.

The new program also follows a more rational approach with cognitive elements taught first in theory, followed by practical exercises. Finally, participants will be

placed 'in scenario' to reinforce that theory. The course has more components that can be assessed by directing staff who look for compliance and provide feedback to determine if the trainee actually has what it takes to be a capacity developer.

Does the IDG fill positions based on skills specific recruitment?

PJ: In the early years, some of the larger missions, for example the Regional Assistance to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), were about getting people offshore, but as the missions have evolved along with our understanding of the challenges, we now advertise specific positions. Through that process we get a better opportunity to assess people's skills. We are looking at more proactive approaches in matching the skills of people who have previously served with roles they may have in the future.

What are the benefits of Solomon Islands Police Force (SIPF) members working as attachments to IDPT Directing Staff?

PJ: There are many benefits, but perhaps the biggest is that the training team has been able to redevelop many of the scenarios so they better reflect the true nature of the Solomon Island culture and practice. Additionally, trainees were exposed to Solomon Islands law through the eyes of current Solomon Islands Police and this has proved invaluable. Being able to build this network before they arrived in the Solomon Islands has proven a strong point for many of the members.

How does the IDG ensure members understand the cultural, historical and social factors that impact on local law and order?

PJ: The training program has recently been redesigned to focus on these issues. Trainees are provided with 'country profiles' specific to their mission, so team members arrive with an appreciation of the local law. There is now an emphasis on local culture and coaching and capacity development, with experts and expatriates from mission countries brought in to train our members.

Does the IDG have an involvement with the AFP's Culture and Language Centre (CLC)?

PJ: The Culture and Language Centre has assisted the IDG in identifying language tuition services for members assigned to special missions, such as Vanuatu.

We are negotiating with the Centre to provide language training as part of pre-deployment training. In addition to providing culture training to our members abroad, we are also considering Australian culture presentations to the Solomon Islands and Pacific Islands Police joining RAMSI. The idea is that they may understand more about how we live in relation to how they live and this may also help the host forgive us for any cultural slip-ups.

Some believe that capacity building missions require longer deployments to build rapport, but how do you balance the welfare of Australian police with the needs of policing abroad?

PJ: The key is 'balance'. We know that short deployments in capacity building are not as effective as longer term ones, but we must also be conscious of the nature of each mission. For example, RAMSI didn't start off as a capacity building mission, but as a requirement to deliver law, order and stabilisation. It was during the phase into capacity building that we started extending the deployments.

Asking anyone to be away from their family for an extended period is difficult. While some would argue that they are well compensated, it's not about the money. So we endeavour to strike a balance that allows people to serve offshore for longer periods, yet continue to have access to their families. There is no easy answer to this, but from each mission we continue to examine the feedback and apply the learning. We welcome input from other agencies and we listen to what the governments in our missions have to say. We strive to find that balance by delivering people on the ground who can build relationships, understand the culture and even learn the language, against the need for people to have some semblance of a home life.

What is the IDG's vision for reducing corruption within local police services in the Pacific?

PJ: This is one of the more difficult aspects of offshore policing. There are different levels and drivers of corruption. Some of the countries we operate in have socio-economic issues which impact greatly. If law enforcement officers are underpaid, the issue of corruption



Above: UN police peace-keeping in Timor-Leste.

will be a real one. So there are these pressures that drive police to bend the rules. We can't excuse that, but we have to understand the drivers. This is why our partnership with AusAID is crucial and why offshore work is a whole-of-government approach. While we can train and better equip police, the reality is they have to be respected and remunerated appropriately. Governments must have the budgets to pay their police an appropriate salary – that is probably the biggest preventer of corruption.

We are going into countries where our new uniforms, new cars and equipment may be a cause of resentment and we need to be conscious of that. It is about sharing the way we are structured within the local force – getting them to understand our culture and our people understanding their local culture. I think if we continue to tackle the problem in a holistic way and deal with all of the issues,

there is light at the end of the tunnel.

How is the interoperability between policing and the military being addressed?

PJ: More has been done on this in the past six months than in the past decade. The AFP and the ADF have recognised that our government demands compatibility in delivering offshore alternatives to situations. We have seen in the past five years, a policing-led mission in which the military has been present and there have been military-led missions where the police have followed. We have made mistakes, but there has been considerable learning.

Collectively we have committed to driving forward areas of commonality. We have a healthy and improved understanding of the roles and responsibilities that each can deliver but we need common ground in the areas of doctrine and



communication. Those situations require an exchange of training initiatives and exercises, so people are not exposed to a situation where our cultures, language and planning methods are different. Both organisations have agreed to a number of senior officer outposts to key areas within the ADF, and likewise the ADF is examining outposting officers to the AFP. There is a genuine sincerity between the two agencies to create an environment where a nation's military force and police service can work together effectively.

What about issues of command and control?

PJ: AFP officers are attending ADF Staff College to understand military concepts of command and control and the Commissioner has endorsed the development of a senior police international command program. The ADF will participate in an environment of mutual learning to share experiences. One of the most valuable opportunities we have is to sit down with Commander Steve Lancaster and Major-General Mick Slater (who both had command responsibilities for Australia's presence in Timor-Leste). We will be drawing on their views as to how we can develop our training regimes to better prepare our senior leadership for offshore missions. We do not want to become the ADF, and

likewise, the ADF do not want to be police either. It is about how we come together when necessary.

The IDG now has a Reintegration Coordination Team (RCT) – can you explain the role of this team?

PJ: Reintegration starts from the moment someone applies to serve offshore. The RCT has to consider where is that person going, for how long, what are the impacts on his or her career, what will they come back to and how the team will facilitate that process. It is a complete cycle and we are making a strong commitment to this. The team will have a full-time career development officer who will help people offshore to continue their own development. We want people to realise that serving offshore may actually enhance, rather than be a detriment, to his or her career and that they may draw on these experiences when applying for promotions. The RCT will be an integral part of the way we support our people into the future.

Given Australia's contribution to the United Nations Integrated Mission (UNIM) in Timor-Leste, do you anticipate we will provide continued support in building their justice sector?

PJ: Our military presence on the ground from day one and our strong policing presence during the height of the riots are strong indicators of Australia's ongoing intention to support Timor-Leste. We currently have 50 Australian police within the UNIM to Timor-Leste. We have a small component as part of the Timor-Leste Police Development

Program and we are currently looking at our possible contribution in relation to the rebuilding of the Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste. At this stage it would be premature to discuss what that might look like.

In 2005, the Papua New Guinea Supreme Court ruled that aspects of the Enhanced Cooperation Package Treaty and enabling legislation were unconstitutional, resulting in the repatriation of 161 Assisting Australian Police. What lessons have been learned from this?

PJ: PNG was beyond our control, in the context of why we withdrew. While we were on the ground, we learned a considerable amount about capacity building and the challenges attached to it. I hope that one day we can return to PNG as we have a lot to offer the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary. We adjust our strategies around an individual country's needs and don't impose one strategy on every country we go to. We are conscious of the needs of specific countries, both culturally and regarding sustainability of what we deliver. While there are some fundamentals, there are other areas specific to respective countries. We would look at those specific needs and shape any mission accordingly.

How do you deal with the dynamic nature of the security, political and cultural environments in which the IDG operates?

PJ: You expect the unexpected. The Group has around 450 officers, currently serving offshore and that is a massive

challenge for any organisation to face. Our people are deployed to areas where law and order has broken down and there is an inability of the local systems to deal with that environment. It is difficult in the context that our presence is not always welcome. We often find ourselves in situations where the majority of the community want us, but certain elements don't. We will always have enemies, but ultimately we are there because we have been invited – and that is often forgotten. We measure our performance in how we develop our counterparts in that country, so our success is ultimately measured on the development of good future leaders. Recently we saw the first promotions of Solomon Islanders into the Executive of the Solomon Islands Police Force. That is the success we are looking at.

What is the greatest challenge facing the IDG today?

PJ: To continue being flexible and striving for excellence in the preparation of our people who serve offshore and in international policing concepts. Our people are talented and I have no doubt of their ability to deliver initiatives. We just need to ensure we remain on the cutting edge by continually reviewing what we do well, what we don't and to learn from our mistakes.

I have never been more proud of the AFP and Australian policing. I have seen police officers perform beyond what was expected and putting their lives on the line for people they barely know. In Timor-Leste, police officers fought to bring stability back amid some of the worst

rioting ever, and in Honiara the officers also demonstrated restraint ensuring civilians remained unharmed. Wherever we go, we always respect people and put the safety of the community first.

Finally, what is the IDG's key strength?

PJ: The AFP – the fact that our offshore missions are populated by a wide range of experience from community policing to investigations. The IDG is a fantastic collection of diversity and skills that the AFP produces.

¹ Policing the Neighbourhood': Australian Police Peace-keeping, Capacity building and Development in Timor-Leste, Solomon

Islands and Papua New Guinea is a joint research project conducted by Professor Andrew Goldsmith from Flinders University, Dr Sinclair Dinnen & Dr Abby McLeod from the Australian National University and Federal Agent Juani O'Reilly from the AFP's IDG. The research team wishes to thank the Australian Research Council and the AFP for supporting this project.

Top left: AFP officer and UN police at docks directing Timorese locals. Bottom left: AFP officer with Solomon Islands children. Middle centre: Commander Denis McDermott, PPFS. Right: Deputy Commissioner Peter Drennan and Pre-deployment training graduate Fleur Jennings. Bottom right: Sergeant Allen Le Lievre with the crews of PPF I, II and III.

