

Red Square for tartaned performers



Photo by Brian Hartigan

The AFP Pipes and Drums will be in full swing when its members join more than 180 other Australian pipes and drums members to take part in Russia's First International Military Festival, Kremlin Zoria in Moscow.

If you live in Canberra and have been hearing the sounds of bagpipes drifting across your suburb, it may well have been members of the AFP Pipes and Drums studiously rehearsing for their first international tattoo. In September 2007, band members will perform over three days in a range of events scheduled for the inaugural festival. Drum Major Gavin Kearney explained what it takes to send 25 Canberra pipe and drums players kitted out in ceremonial dress to the ancient Kremlin walls of Russia.

"It's a very exciting time for us as this is the first time our band has been asked to participate in an event outside of Australia," Mr Kearney said. "Over the past few months we have been busy rehearsing in addition to our normal Tuesday night practice."

"We are pleased to represent the AFP as part of this significant Australian performance contingent including the Western Australian Police Pipe Band, the Ipswich Thistle Pipe Band from Queensland, the Rats of Tobruk Pipe Band from Victoria and South Australia Pipes and Drums."

The band will be heading to Moscow in early September to prepare for the event which will be held from 13-16 September. The Australian representatives



Photo by Terry Browne

will play en masse along with pipes and drums bands from Great Britain, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand.

"Our band will be busy attending the five tattoo performances planned as part of the festival in the Red Square, as well as participating with all the countries in a large parade along Moscow's major street, Tverskaya, which will be an amazing experience for all of us," Mr Kearney said. "We are also looking forward to the opportunity of performing solo at various venues around Moscow."

Since June this year, members have met regularly at the AFP's Weston complex for drill training and full musical practice to ensure they are performing at a professional level.

"In addition to meeting three times a week, we have been liaising with the organisers of the event which has been challenging at times given our limited skills in the Russian language,"

Drum Major Gavin Kearney and members of band brushing up on Russian language skills

Mr Kearney said. "Over the past few months in the lead-up to heading to Moscow, we have certainly improved our skills and have a few key words to get us by."

Mr Kearney also explained that the band had been invited by the Singapore Police for an official reception and to participate with their band members in a jam session on their return trip home from Russia.

In 1993, the band was officially appointed the Honorary Pipe Band to the AFP. Over the years, the AFP has supported the band by providing uniform items and performance opportunities. In 2006, the band was invited to perform at the 2006 Commonwealth Bank International Police Tattoo as the official AFP pipe band.

For further information on Kremlin Zoria visit www.kremlin-zoria.ru.