

Capacity building in the Asia region

Open for less than a year, the AFP's office in the Bangladesh capital of Dhaka is beginning to reap the benefits of assisting local authorities in countering entrenched corruption in the country's government and administrative services.

Opened on Australia Day this year, the AFP's presence in Bangladesh was prompted by the need to assist local law enforcement confront a number of crime-related activities which have the potential to affect Australia. These activities include corruption, people smuggling and terrorism.

Federal Agent Mark Briskey, the AFP's Senior Liaison Officer in Dhaka, said he is encouraged by the assistance the AFP has been able to make to Bangladesh in the relatively short time the office has been operating. The Dhaka office



Bottom left: Federal Agent Mark Briskey with Director General Mohammad Abu Talib Miah of the Anti-Corruption Commission (Bangladesh) and Deputy Director General of Bangladesh Anti-Corruption Commission, Mohammad Shafiqur Rahman Bhuiyan.

is a part of the AFP's International Network which has a presence in 27 countries. The AFP International Liaison Officers are Australia's law enforcement representatives overseas and their role includes collaboration, intelligence gathering and capacity building in each host country and surrounding region. The Dhaka office is also responsible for Australia's law enforcement interests in Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

During 2007, the AFP's Dhaka and Hong Kong offices joined forces to foster a strategic relationship between the Bangladesh Anti-Corruption Commission (B-ACC) and the Hong Kong Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) to aid the Bangladesh authorities develop an effective approach to dealing with corruption.

The Corruption Perceptions Index 2005, a survey published by Berlin-based anti-corruption advocacy group, Transparency International, placed Bangladesh among

the countries where corruption was most rampant. Bangladesh has held this rating five years in a row, a situation that makes it challenging for the AFP and other law enforcement agencies to investigate transnational crime in the region.

Until January 2007, Bangladesh experienced heightened levels of political tension and its two major political parties had reached an impasse on an agreed agenda for implementing an election. In the same month, a caretaker administration was instituted and supported by major Bangladesh institutions including the military. Since that time, the caretaker administration has robustly pursued an anti-corruption policy.

The actions of this group have included implementing specific anti-corruption legislation, creating the B-ACC to replace its corruption-tainted predecessor, and investigating political corruption which linked members of the two major political parties to the funding of terrorist groups.



A number of people have been sentenced to prison following these investigations into former bureaucrats, major political figures, members of the police service and all other major arms of government. The B-ACC aims to instill integrity into all levels of the political, bureaucratic and civil sectors and to show how corruption has interfered with the country's ability to combat terrorism.

With this in mind, the B-ACC asked several foreign missions, including the Australian Embassy, for assistance and guidance in developing a robust anti-corruption body that could re-introduce integrity and honesty into its government agencies and ultimately create more public trust.

The Australian Government responded to the request by supplying crucial computer equipment following a coordinated effort by the AFP and the United Nations Office for Project Service Police Reform Programme.

The AFP also identified the value of having

the B-ACC linked to a key Asian anti-corruption body such as the Hong Kong ICAC which aided by the support of their government and community, has been able to fight corruption and make Hong Kong one of the least corrupt places in the world. This link has connected the B-ACC to a triple A-rated anti-corruption body that covered both public and private sector corruption.

An added benefit of the association was that the Hong Kong ICAC was also an Asian model and more appropriate to Bangladesh than an Australian anti-corruption model. The link also showed B-ACC personnel proven methods of establishing a solid foundation for their fledgling organisation.

In late August and early September, the Director-General of B-ACC, Mohammad Abu Talib Miah, and his delegation met with the Deputy Commissioner and Head of Operations of the ICAC, Daniel Li. The B-ACC delegation was able to

take away a thorough understanding of ICAC including how it was formed – its infrastructure and legislative development – and particularly the direct correlation between ICAC anti-corruption achievements and new investor confidence in Hong Kong since 1976.

They were also shown how ICAC has implemented robust and workable solutions including its three-pronged approach of investigation, prevention and education to fight corruption.

Federal Agent Briskey said that in addition to facilitating this strategic alliance, the Dhaka office has also participated in a range of activities to promote improved law enforcement in the region.

These activities include a workshop held by the Australian High Tech Crime Centre with the Hong Kong Police High Technology Crime Division in mid-November. As well, two AFP analysts were attached for three weeks to the Bangladesh Police Reform Programme (PRP)

to assist with anti-human trafficking. The Dhaka office has also assisted the B-ACC with counter-terrorism capacity building by providing computer hardware in a joint program with PRP and by facilitating attendance at the December 2007 Bali Process People Smuggling Workshop.

Assistant Commissioner and National Manager for International Tim Morris said the establishment of the Dhaka office was an important addition to the AFP's International Network that enhanced the vital role the network plays in protecting Australia's security as well as providing a valuable service to all AFP activities.

Top left: Federal Agent Briskey with Mohammad Shafiqur Rahman Bhuiyan, Mohammad Abu Talib Miah and Wing-keung, Raymond SO of the ICAC. Top right: F/A Briskey with the Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Douglas Foskett providing part of the IT assistance to the Chairman of the B-ACC, retired Lieutenant General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury and Secretary of the ACC, Mokhles ur Rahman;

Bottom left: Senior Assistant Commissioner of Hong Kong Police Mike Dowie with Mr Miah at the Hong Kong Police headquarters. Bottom right: F/A Briskey with the Chief Investigator of ICAC Operations Department Mike Burley, Mr Miah and Mr Bhuiyan.

Federal Agent Briskey was previously posted to Islamabad, Pakistan, from November 1998 to December 2001. He was also in the first contingent of 18 to respond to the investigation of the Bali bombings known as *Operation Alliance* and was team leader of the Forward Command Post during the initial stage of the AFP response to that incident.

