

OLIA HANDS OVER ITS LIAISON FUNCTIONS

By PETER WINDSOR, Director of Information

Tucked away in what Canberra's have long called the Barton Woolsheds is what used to be OLIA, the acronym for the AFP's Overseas Liaison Branch. Now the title will fade into history.

OLIA has been abolished and replaced by the International Division, with a considerable restructuring and wider base of responsibilities.

The new International Division has been placed under the control of the Office of the Commissioner of Police. OLIA was part of the Investigations Department.

Through the Chief of Staff the Division not only takes over the functions of OLIA, but also:

- the administration of the AFP representation on Cyprus and Christmas and Norfolk Islands;
- the administrative arrangements, on behalf of the Commissioner, of Interpol's National Central Bureau;
- the arrangements for all overseas visits to and from the AFP, including the direction of program content and administrative detail.

The new Division will be commanded by a Superintendent (currently Superintendent Jim Allen), and is another step forward in the AFP's development.

The first new post under the International Division's aegis — in Singapore — will be opened in March next year.

The growth of the AFP's representation had its genesis in 1973 when the now disbanded Federal Narcotics Bureau established law enforcement posts in Malaysia and later in Bangkok and Jakarta.

That trend was continued by the former Commonwealth Police when, in 1977, an officer was seconded from New Scotland Yard. Two years later, the Australian Police Commissioners' Conference agreed that an officer be sent to New Zealand.

Today, the International Division has 15 officers at 10 overseas posts — plus the 20-man Cyprus Contingent and the AFP representatives on Christmas and Norfolk Islands.

"There has rarely been a shortage of acceptable applicants for those positions, whereas interest needs rekindling in the liaison posts," said International Division's Chief Inspector Tom Lack.

Chief Inspector Lack is quick to point out that the liaison network feeds back information not just of interest to the AFP, but to all Australian police forces.

"Let no one query, for example, that it was the combination of good intelligence work from Australia and a particularly good contact within the Metropolitan Police made by Acting Inspector Tim Egan that helped, behind the scenes, in the moves that led, finally, to the arrest of Robert Trimbole."

Chief Inspector Lack also stressed that an overseas posting was not without its pressures and traumas, pressures and traumas that varied from region-to-region, post-to-post.

"It's perfectly understandable when one thinks of the geographic groupings of the AFP's posts — South-East Asia, New Zealand, Europe and America. The reason applicants are carefully scrutinised is because we are aware of these pressures."

AFP's overseas role grows as more posts open

"It must never be overlooked that there is much to contend with and that the person is representing not just the AFP but also Australia," Chief Inspector Lack said.

As 1985 approaches the AFP's representation is:

Los Angeles: Chief Inspector John Adams, Senior Sergeant Gary Wills.

Washington: Superintendent Alan Mills, Acting Station Sergeant John Davies.

Islamabad: Acting Inspector Kerry Hill.

Hong Kong: Acting Inspector Brian Bennett.

Manila: Inspector Dennis Craft.

London: Acting Inspector Tim Egan.

Bangkok: Inspector Col Rowley, Sergeant Peter Zdjelnr, Sergeant Tom O'Brien, (Sergeant O'Brien will be replaced by Sergeant Roger Middleton in January, 1985).

Kuala Lumpur: Chief Inspector David Schramm, Sergeant Dennis Gray.

Wellington: Ted Foster, who at the time of writing, had just replaced Rob Milner.

But what is it that the AFP looks for in applicants for overseas posts? That question I also put to Chief Inspector Lack.

"It's best that I make the point that most of our overseas positions are at the rank of Inspector," he said.

"Realistically, the group most likely to be considered for postings are those in any of the three Sergeant bands or members already at the rank of Inspector.

"With perhaps one exception, the AFP's overseas positions are now occupied for almost the next two years. However, considering the lead time necessary to consider applications, arrange interviews by the Overseas Selection Panel, and then allow members sufficient time to organise their departure, expressions of interest from now onwards would be welcomed," Chief Inspector Lack said.

A formal application could be lodged once a vacancy was officially advertised.

"You asked what specifically AFP management looks for when considering applications. So many things, but certainly as the great percentage of the work in South-East Asian and Wellington posts is drug-related, we look for people who have had experience in drug-related areas," he said.

"That way so much of what it is necessary to know is already second nature. People are familiar with the environment and the terminology.

"In America, the requirement is more a background in the organised crime and intelligence areas. The United Kingdom requires more straight operational and investigative police experience of the traditional kind."

I ventured a 'horses for courses' comment.

"Yes," he said, "but many of our horses will do for both courses."

He said that, in addition to the career-related backgrounds of applicants, other points to be considered, and considered seriously,



• Tom Lack

were such things as a person's age and health, the health of their wives, their children, the adaptability of the applicant, whether they were self-starters, and whether the applicant was considered capable of being both a worthy ambassador for the AFP and Australia.

On a post-by-post basis, the majority of the workload is:

Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta — primarily drug related; Islamabad — almost entirely drug related;

Hong Kong — principally a commercial crime post with some emphasis on drugs;

Manila — mainly organised crime, but drug related police experience is also advantageous;

New Zealand — drug-related but general policing experience is also of considerable assistance;

USA — experience in the organised crime and drug fields essential;

UK — wide investigative police experience and experience also in the drug, organised and commercial areas, an advantage;

Singapore — when operational, it will have similar characteristics to Hong Kong.

A secondary, but still vital aspects of overseas liaison, is the two-way exchange of information.

The overseas monitoring role is expected to cover all aspect of police work, be they administrative or operational — anything that impacts on policing in today's and tomorrow's society.

What is it like overseas?

What is an overseas posting really like?

This was the question I put to Superintendent Peter Lamb (recently returned from Los Angeles), Detective Chief Inspector Lloyd Worthy (London) and Station Sergeant Steve Polden (Bangkok).

"Without a doubt Los Angeles was a fantastic posting," Peter Lamb said. "But it's unfair to compare it with some of the South-East Asian posts for obvious reasons."

"You have to look at the life-style, the climate, housing, schooling, one's own policing experience and adaptability and if you're a family man, the adaptability of your wife and kids.

"This is vital. No matter where you go, there is an impact on the family. But I must say the southern Californian life-style, of all of the American life-styles, is so very similar to that of the one I'd left behind in Sydney, with the exception that I was living very much as any ordinary, wage-earning Australian. You couldn't compare that with the life-style in the Palos



• Peter Lamb

Verdes Estate 30 kilometres out of LA where we lived.

"It was very much an up-market, exclusive area. The house, for example, had its own swimming pool and tennis court. Certainly the outdoor life abounds, just as it does in Sydney with swimming, surfing, water skiing and the traditional barbecue, American style. That part of it is excellent. Your career experience, however, has to make you totally a self-starter.

"In America you never deal with any one organisation, as is very much the case, say, in London. You have to deal with 34,000 of them. I made my contacts and those contacts worked.

"But the impact on the family is considerable. Kids in these affluent areas undergo immense peer pressure to achieve, much more so than the ordinary Australian kid. It's peer pressure rather than teacher pressure because of the American grading system.

"Your wife must also be adaptable and resilient. The nature of the job involves a great deal of travel. In all honesty I can say I was away from home almost as much as I was at it. That, in a foreign environ-

ment, impacts greatly on my wife."

And how did Peter's wife, Von, feel about it? "The best piece of advice I think I can give to any woman is become involved," she said. "By this I mean if you stay behind closed doors, life could quickly become unbearable. You have to want to become involved and be able to cope with doing that. The initial, what you might call the transition period, is the most difficult because things are so different.

"Your children, if they are of school age, find the initial adjustment very hard. Again you have to ask for understanding. If you speak up, nicely but firmly, you achieve your purpose. Americans expect parents to speak up.

"But you must be diplomatic, and you must be able to cope with entertaining, both formally as well as informally.

"And please, read up about your own country. The Americans want to know so much about Australia. It helps to re-read your own history, geography and population levels. You'll be asked the most incredible things."

But for her, an overwhelming