

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

TO NEW DIVISION

memory was the friendliness of the American people.

"The week we moved in, the street put on a 'Welcome to America' luncheon which was fantastic. I think their 'Welcome Waggon' is another marvellous idea. These are run by local government and local business houses. They come to

your home and tell you where to shop, what to buy, what price to pay and a whole host of other information.

"I think a place like Canberra could pick up that idea and make it work just as it does in the States," she said.

Big, bad London

Detective Chief Inspector Lloyd Worthy is the first to admit that after growing used to the quiet, comfortable, easy-going life-style of Canberra, London was quite a shock for the whole Worthy family of six.



• Lloyd Worthy

"The AFP's role in the United Kingdom is unique in that you are not attached to the High Commission or Embassy. You work from New Scotland Yard, more specifically from the Central Drugs and Illegal Immigration and Intelligence Unit," he said.

Inspector Worthy's two-year UK posting is something he still talks about.

"Work-wise, it was stimulating because it was multi-faceted. It involved intelligence gathering, monitoring the movement of Australian criminals in and out of the UK and Europe and tracking the movement of international criminals in and out of Australia," he said.

"From my point of view, the person in the UK needs extensive investigational experience. Almost equally important is that you have to be adaptable. Your actions can reflect not just on the AFP, but Australia. The UK is very much still a class conscious society and the police force is much more rank conscious than here. Certainly you have to be able to mix socially at all levels of society.

"Of course the climate and the life-styles were different. So was the schooling. My four kids moved from ordinary Australian schools into the English Comprehensive education system, but they coped. They found it hard, particularly at first, but they grew to like it and made lots of new friends.

"And because London is so cosmopolitan, there was no doubt that as time went by, the experience had a great maturing effect on the kids; in fact on the whole family.

"I think we're better for it".

"Lloyd's wife, Pam, would readily agree, but understandably her experience, particularly initially, was the more traumatic.

"For me it was the first time out of Australia," she said. "The Cooma-Canberra-London syndrome did take some readjustment. The first three months were the most difficult, and it was a combination of factors that made it so. The culture shock. Yes, it happens. Quiet, friendly Canberra to big, bad London was quite a shock. Bad because things are more impersonal and people are not as trusting. They can't afford to be. Most big cities are the same. People just don't make the time to stop and say more than hello or to worry whom their next door neighbours are.

"Another is that being a one-off post detached from the High Commission, you can't readily contact wives of other new arrivals.

"Here I'd give one big piece of advice — be outgoing. Join things where you can. Be patient, be understanding and be prepared for many a sad story from your kids. They get the Pommie syndrome in reverse. They were called 'dingoes'. The Poms thought that a friendly term, but my kids didn't.

"Certainly the readjustment in those early months comes hard when you know no one and long for female company. Afterwards, when you've made friends, dear friends, as we did, you can look back on it and wonder how something initially so difficult would become so good.

"You have to be able to entertain and you have to be able to cope away from family and all the other supportive apparatus you've been used to getting.

"It was a great experience — for all of the family."

Pam also suggested that wives read as widely as possible about the country, and try to check out what to take with someone who has been there.



• Mrs Beverley Polden talks with the Thai Deputy Director of Police, Lieut.-General Saneh Sittipunt.

Culture in Bangkok

Contrast those views, from countries with no language barrier and similar cultural backgrounds, to those from Steve Polden. Steve served in both Bangkok and Malaysia.



• Steve Polden

"Every post has its peculiarities — Bangkok's would be the massive culture shock, the weather, the noise and pollution levels, and the language barrier," he said.

"It was difficult enough for both my wife and me, and we'd travelled extensively in South-East Asia and lived for nearly two years in Darwin, where the climatic conditions are similar, before being posted."

Both Steve and his wife Beverley believe strongly that the AFP could benefit from language training for future Bangkok representatives.

"It is not just a firmly established requirement for Foreign Affairs appointees, but also for many of the representatives from other police forces and agencies in the Thai capital.

"Unlike other South-East Asian posts — Singapore and Hong Kong for example — which are highly Westernised, English has not yet become the second language in Thailand. Without the language you are initially at a big disadvantage."

The options are either pre-posting language training or the three-month in-house course on arrival. Steve believes the latter is the most beneficial.

"Work-wise, Bangkok would be one of the busiest and one of the most successful of all our posts," he said. "One good reason for this is the level of co-operation from the Thai police.

"You are constantly busy. For most of my posting we were responsible for liaison with Nepal, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and in the early part of the posting, for Hong Kong.

"It is a work post."

Steve said many police forces also were represented, including New Zealand, Canada, the United States, France, Hong Kong, Germany, Thailand and Italy, as well as Interpol.

"That liaison, from an intelligence point of view, is a fantastic opportunity. The vast majority of the work is drug-related with some requirement for general policing experience."

Both Steve and Beverley found an important requirement was the ability to mix at all levels of society.

"This is something all wives have to be prepared to handle," Beverley

said. "And be prepared to have your house, or in our case, town-house used as a home-away-from-home.

"You are constantly entertaining."

On other important issues, the Poldens' advice is:

- Schooling — Two schools, one British, one American. The British school catered only for primary school age children, the American for high school students but was run on the American system. Most Australians boarded their children in Australia. Those who had sent theirs to the American school found the children faced repeating a year on returning home.
- Accommodation — Adequate. The Poldens had a three-bedroom town-house and two maids — essential if you have children or are to maintain the level of entertainment and social commitments expected of you.
- Lifestyle — Initially a considerable shock from the point of view of the sheer noise level, pollution and overcrowding and the language barrier.
- Allowance — Adequate.
- Transport — Adequate, as the AFP team of officers and clerical staff has access to two small cars.

And a final summation from Steve: "Initially bloody difficult, but by the end of the posting, a lifestyle you're enjoying and generally sorry to leave."

That's a scene-setter, a mere pen-picture of the requirements, impacts and life-styles of overseas experience. It can't possibly, from afar, be a totally comprehensive picture.

The in-depth and up-to-date view must come from those already overseas. And that 'Platypus' is fixing.

Throughout 1985 we will bring you extensive post reports, suitably illustrated, from each of the AFP's overseas posts and their representatives.

These reports will pick up and cover the nature of the job, the living standards, the impact of family life-styles, the advantages, the disadvantages, the availability of schooling and educational standards, the allowances measured realistically against the cost of living, and the whole gambit of information necessary to enable anyone thinking of applying for an overseas position to be as widely informed as possible.



• The Worthy family in Trafalgar Square.