

The special tasks undertaken by the AFP

Investigations of a sensitive or complex nature which are referred to the AFP often involve extensive liaison and co-operation with other agencies in Australia and overseas.

The AFP responds to allegations which are sensitive and complex by nature.

Initial referrals may originate from Commonwealth agencies or other statutory authorities, various state agencies or the general community but are formally referred by the Minister for Justice or the AFP senior executive for investigation.

Plane crash questions

In late 1994, the Civil Aviation Authority referred an investigation involving the crash of a plane belonging to a privately-owned airline company. Allegations involved the possible corruption in the aircraft industry and criminal offences being committed by CAA staff. The investigation revealed no criminal offences had been committed by airline staff. However, it was possible that disciplinary offences had been committed by CAA staff.

Sarin gas

As a result of the sarin gas attack in Tokyo in March 1995, the AFP investigated the activities of the Aum Supreme Truth religious sect in Australia. Investigations centred on a property purchased by the sect in 1993 located in central Western Australia.

It is believed the sect has conducted experiments on sheep using the nerve agent sarin. The evidence obtained from the joint AFP/Western



A police officer searching a sector of a rubbish tip on a property in Western Australia as a result of the sarin gas attack in Tokyo in March 1995. The AFP investigated the activities of the Aum Supreme Truth religious sect in Australia.

Australia Police investigation was vital to the Japanese National Police Agency whose officers travelled to Australia to investigate the sect's activities.

Weapons

Assistance was given to the Queensland Police Counter Terrorist Section in providing advice on search and interview procedures under Commonwealth legislation. The matter related to the arrest of an Australian citizen at Runaway Bay on charges against the *Crimes Incursions and Recruitment Act*. It was alleged the person charged attempted to procure weapons which were to be used in an attempt to overthrow the Cameroon Government.

Currency

The AFP is responsible for coordinating and investigating offences which fall within the provisions of the *Crimes (Currency) Act 1981*. There is a continuing close liaison with state police services, US Secret Service, Interpol, and other Australian and overseas law enforcement agencies.

In March and April 1995 a member of the US Secret Service visited Australia and conducted American currency seminars in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. This was backed up by the Reserve Bank of Australia conducting Australian currency workshops in Melbourne and Sydney. Counterfeit currency referrals have increased dramatically involving Australian and foreign currency.



Australian counterfeiters not only target local currency, but also US currency because of its ready acceptance world-wide.

A total of 1178 currency matters were investigated during the year with 3095 offences being identified.

Of note among these offences was an arrest in April 1995 of an offender by the NSW Police on charges of uttering counterfeit notes at a local business. In an interview conducted by the AFP he admitted to uttering and making the notes. A search of his premises located the equipment used and approximately \$1 million in counterfeit \$100 notes and \$10 000 in genuine notes.

International credit card fraud

In August 1994 information was received indicating two Americans had been involved in importing drugs into Australia. Information further strengthened the inquiry when it was established significant telegraphic funds transfers had been sent to the US over a two-week period.

After the arrest of one offender the investigation identified the two were actually involved in international credit card fraud. The total value of the funds obtained illegally was in excess of \$250,000. Inquiries with the US Secret Service discovered that the two Americans were experienced

fraud offenders, possibly linked to the 'Fredericks of Hollywood' credit card fraud gang.

In December 1994, investigations concluded after the arrest of one person for international credit card fraud. The AFP established that the offender was conducting credit card fraud activities internationally, with most of his victims being residents of the USA. The fraud amounted to about US\$100,000 with the total losses resulting from his trading in credit card numbers to more than \$US395,432.

Another emerging trend is the importation and use of counterfeit credit cards. The AFP, Customs, state police and banking industry groups continue to co-operate on the growing problem. Inadequate legislation continues to inhibit prosecuting offenders. Submissions have been made to the Attorney-General's office for modification of the law.

Emerging Offences

Computer crime continues to challenge the investigative capacity of the AFP. In accordance with the national working guidelines on the investigation of computer crime, closer liaison and co-operation has been established with computer security 'watchdog' organisations including the Australian Security Emergency Response Team (AUSERT), the USA Defense Research Program (DARPA), and the Australian Academic and Research Network (AARNET).

Independent computer crime networks for investigators have been implemented throughout Australia and improvements toward the AFP's national capacity to investigate computer crimes have therefore been enhanced.

December 1994, a significant computer crime investigation was undertaken by the AFP and search warrants were executed in Queensland in relation to an investigation where Australian hackers were unlawfully accessing another country's networks. The damage caused by the hackers was



The AFP maintains a world-wide network of liaison officers who gather information of relevance to law enforcement in Australia. Liaison officers do not get involved in police operations in their host countries, but facilitate the two-way flow of information to the benefit of law enforcement in Australia and the host country.

estimated at \$US2 million. Had the hackers caused permanent damage to these government networks then the damage bill could have been up to \$US50 million an hour.

Another investigation culminated in two Brisbane students being charged with a total of 193 computer hacking offences involving serious intrusions into several Australian and US university and government computer systems.

In July 1994 the AFP investigated an incident of unlawful hacking into a Sydney-based international company. The investigation found a former employee had copied program source codes and accessible files then electronically mailed them to his personal computer. The value of material taken was conservatively valued at \$300,000. The ex-employee was found guilty of the offence and was committed to 200 hours community service and the forfeiture of his computer equipment to the AFP. This equipment is now being used in the AFP's Sydney office.

International liaison

The AFP continues to support and enhance the international obligations of the Commonwealth and maintains a high profile in the international law enforcement arena.

The senior liaison officer in Rome

has assisted with the implementation of memoranda of understanding and agreements between the Italian anti-Mafia and anti-drug authorities in Italy and the AFP and the NCA in Australia. These agreements facilitate the gathering of intelligence beneficial to both countries in combating drug trafficking and identifying people involved in money laundering and organised crime activities.

With the breakdown of the former USSR there has been a dramatic increase in organised criminal activity. The AFP liaison officers in Rome and London have been forwarding strategic intelligence on eastern European organised crime generally, but particularly, money laundering, drug trafficking and illegal immigration.

In general terms liaison officers become involved in mutual assistance requests both to and from the host countries and Australia, proceeds of crime action and international extraditions. With the higher awareness of paedophilia activities and the introduction of legislation in Australia, liaison officers become increasingly involved in intelligence on paedophilia, particularly in the South-East Asia region.

Liaison officers regularly represent Australian law-enforcement agencies at conferences and seminars relating to organised crime, financial crimes and drug trafficking.

Co-operation

As an indication of the level of co-operation between law enforcement agencies, the largest seizure of heroin in Australia's history arrived in Darwin with 123kgs seized from a fishing vessel. The seizure was a result of extensive co-operation between the AFP liaison officer network in South East Asia, the Australian Customs Service and the Combined Drug Enforcement Unit of the Northern Territory Police.

AFP liaison officers have continued to prove invaluable in the supply of intelligence and information in addition to subsequent prosecution related enquiries.

The AFP co-operated with overseas authorities into the activities of a number of members of the Solar Temple cult group which came to international prominence through the murder/suicides of 53 members in Switzerland and Canada. Expensive properties and a substantial amount of cash were identified.

Several of extradition requests were received from overseas agencies and actioned, including a continuing protracted extradition application for the return of an alleged major drug trafficker to the USA and the successful return of an alleged drug trafficker to New Zealand.