

ASIAN ORGANISED CRIME CONFERENCE CLOSING ADDRESS

International cooperation the key to fighting organised crime

By Commissioner Mick Palmer

Over the past three days we have addressed some of the particular and unique characteristics of Asian organised crime which we as law enforcement officials must address if we are to effectively serve our respective countries and our collective peoples.

To me, one of the most significant features of organised criminal activity is not only its ability to continuously adapt to change but the fact that to remove one criminal or group results simply in another filling that void, almost immediately. Law enforcement's response has to recognise this reality as Rick Shaffer said: "To take a spoon full of water out of a bucket is to see that hole made by the spoon immediately re-filled with water".

While not yet as entrenched perhaps as say Italian organised crime, Asian organised criminal activity impacts just as severely in many countries through crimes such as arms dealing, drug trafficking, extortion, money laundering, people smuggling, fraud, corruption of officials, tax evasion, prostitution and home invasions. We have been privileged to hear the opinions, the experiences, the proposals and the intuitive feelings of some of the best and most knowledgeable practitioners in this field, over the past few days, and everyone I believe has been enriched by the exposure.

Asian organised crime is capable and exploitative of the international travel and communications networks, particularly for the transmission of funds by wire-transfers around the world.

Undoubtedly, criminal groups have and will continue to take advantage of all of the technological advances which otherwise benefit legitimate business and trade — as those opportunities increase in particular regions, so must the

opportunities for criminals also increase, particularly organised criminals.

We have learned over the past three days of the activities of some specific Asian crime groups, for example, the Japanese Boryokudan and its relentless pursuit of money using the overt menace of its organisation. We have equally learned of the need to educate our communities to not be intimidated and fearful of such groups but that, as law enforcement agencies, we must earn the trust of our communities so that people can have confidence in reporting crime, no matter by whom it may have been committed. The incisive and frank observations of Shoichiro Ishikawa and the pragmatic examples of Helen Sham-Ho touched specifically on these issues.

The remarks made by Paul Coffey in which he described Vietnamese crime as not yet being 'assimilated' into American society, should send a chilling warning to other countries — the thought of organised criminal activity actually forming a part of the every day fabric of any society must surely be our greatest motivation at the state, national and international levels.

It seems to me that there is much to recommend the sort of criminal enterprise investigation model, driven by the equal development of a criminal intelligence database, as described by the FBI. For too long we have been concerned with the productivity of our organisations being counted by the number of arrests rather than the



Commissioner Mick Palmer gives the closing address of the conference.

G. Porter

quality of the groups dismantled as a consequence of protracted investigations.

Our task is to deter and control organised crime and in this we must reduce market opportunities, reduce demand and increase the costs to criminals of doing business. The techniques, if not necessarily the resources, available to law enforcement in carrying out these tasks are significant and sophisticated, but still, in large terms, we do little more than scratch the surface — or irritate the monster.

We cannot and must not become complacent and must continue to use our best endeavours to professionally serve our communities. It would be very easy indeed as Michael Bishop said to see an erosion of the existing special legislative tools which are available to law enforcement and we must do our utmost to ensure that does not occur. As Tom Sherman said a moment ago, part of the challenge is to ensure we use our powers to best effect. But also as David Hodson commented, it is equally important to ensure the powers we have are appropriate to the problems. Traditional police powers are aimed at historical crime.

Organised crime is an ongoing process. Perhaps we do need to be more vocal in focussing attention on a redirection — a modernisation of powers, legislation and procedures. As part of this process emphasis on the importance of negating the threat to human rights posed by the organised crime is both important and accurate.

For the immediate future however, we must recognise that the game is bigger than the players and that the future must be one of complete cooperation — of liaison and alliances — of multiagency, multijurisdictional — and ever more frequently international task force operations.

Task forces which consist of the skills, expertise, authority and flexibility need to best:

- target the criminal enterprise and/or individuals/groups under investigation;
- make use of the legal powers and authorities of the jurisdictions in which investigations are conducted;
- minimise demarcation lines and other restrictions which may operate to

otherwise restrict effective investigation and the court process;

- mix and match the range of expert skills and local knowledge likely to be vital to success; and
- share and utilise relevant intelligence.

No thinking law enforcement officer believes otherwise.

This conference has — in the most specific and dramatic way — highlighted the complexities, the sophistication and the cultural differences which combine to form the fabric of organised crime in the 1990s. The insights, thoughtful analysis and perceptive problem identification of David Hodson and a number of other speakers provide graphic illustrations of these issues.

The '90s offer an environment of diversity, interaction and partnership (albeit loose leaf) between organised criminal groups — an environment of unprecedented mobility and internationality — of unprecedented variety and profitability and potential for power. Never has crime been more unpredictable and flexible — probably rarely have more opportunities been available for consideration by active criminal minds.

If law enforcement agencies as we know them are to remain credible and relevant they must be equal to the challenge. When we talk of cooperation and interagency investigative teams our eyes must match our mouths. Our actions match our words.

Whilst the environment changes almost daily — and what is appropriate today may be inadequate tomorrow — the enormous expertise, experience, determination and courage possessed by so many law enforcement officers individually, and by agencies collectively, provides us with the weaponry to win out in the long haul — but long haul it will be.

Every effort, every dollar must be directed to improving our individual and collective effectiveness. We must become more flexible, imaginative, clever, patient, resourceful, more collegiate and more influential.

Teamwork has always been essential to police work. But the size and structure of the team has changed.

Whilst local knowledge of the patch

will remain important, law enforcement officers must recognise their patch is part of a global patchwork quilt — a quilt of a thousand cultures and languages, of many governments and legal systems.

Competition, turf protection, one-upmanship, headline grabbing — call it what you will — must be seen and damned as professional blasphemy.

We must feed off the skills and knowledge of each other.

Interagency/jurisdictional teamwork has never been better — but much more needs to be done.

Too often still we do only as much as is needed — rather than as much as is possible.

Too often still we find reasons not to share or to go alone when “to share — or go together” is to turn a half chance into a real chance.

This conference, as one of a series, is not just aimed at police agencies but at the broader spectrum of law enforcement by the inclusion of prosecutors and those concerned with policy development. The work of the first conference in San Francisco in 1991 was continued in Tokyo in 1993 and now in Sydney in 1994. The challenges of organising such conferences are considerable but so too is our task in combating the growth of organised crime.

I would like therefore to issue a call to another country to consider hosting a similar conference in the next 12 to 18 months so that the understandings, the national and international cooperation developed so far, can continue to develop in our joint efforts against organised crime. Australia for its part is willing to assist in any way we possibly can, those who might wish to organise the next conference.

While it is perhaps ironic it is nevertheless the case that this conference was made possible by a grant from Australia's Confiscated Assets Trust Fund — those monies confiscated as a result of criminal activities in this country. It is pleasing to see that not only are the criminals being deprived of their illicit profits, but that we together are learning how to combat organised criminal activity and that we are truly doing so at the criminals' expense.