

## AFP members commended amidst Cyprus strife



Foreign Minister Alexander Downer



AFP United Nations peacekeepers on duty during recent demonstrations on Cyprus

*Foreign Minister Alexander Downer commended the professionalism and courage of unarmed United Nations peacekeepers, including a contingent of 20 AFP officers during the outbreak of violence on Cyprus, news service AAP reported recently.*

Mr Downer said he deplored the outbreak of inter-communal violence in the United Nations-controlled buffer zone on the island, the service reported.

Violent clashes between Greek and Turkish-Cypriot communities in the UN buffer zone dividing the island left one person dead and about 50 others injured.

"I am very concerned about the danger this violence poses for the United Nations contingent on Cyprus," Mr Downer said.

He said the Australian government urged community leaders on the island to ensure such outbreaks did not recur.

"I commend the professionalism and courage displayed by unarmed UN forces, including the contingent of Australian Federal Police during the outbreak of violence," he said.

"The Australian government calls on all parties on the island of Cyprus to ensure that the tragic and violent events of the weekend do not detract from the efforts to find a negotiated peaceful and lasting solution to this protracted and distressing international problem."

The service said that the federal government had ruled out any immediate end to its Cyprus commitment which is Australia's longest-running peacekeeping mission.

A contingent of Australian state and federal police first went to Cyprus in 1964 to assist in preventing inter-communal violence and the future of the mission had been questioned persistently for much of its 32 years.

Strong support from the 750,000 Greek and Cypriot community in Australia was one reason it had endured.

More recently, the previous Labor government queried whether the commitment was justified in view of the complete absence of progress towards a peace settlement. Mr Downer said Australia supported the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus.

He said it had consistently supported UN efforts to promote a solution to problems on the island.