

# Bomb data conference 'relevant and timely from

In December, Commissioner Mick Palmer opened the Australian Bomb Data Centre Conference in Canberra. The main theme of the conference was the sharing of that information. This was the first time that an international conference has been held to discuss the capture and transfer of bomb data between countries. The commissioner said he hoped the conference would encourage a more formal basis relating to the exchange bomb information and intelligence in the future. The following excerpts are from Commissioner Palmer's address to the conference.

*Police collect evidence at the scene of the bombing of Sydney's Hilton Hotel in 1978. The incident led to the formation of the Australian Federal Police.*



*It is somewhat ironic that a bomb blast led to the formation of the Australian Federal Police. We were created as a response to the international rise in terrorism in the 70s culminating, in Australia, with the bombing of the Hilton Hotel in Sydney in 1978. Prior to this incident Australia did not have a national policing body that could investigate incidents of this type.*

And as we look over the horizon to the year 2000 and the Sydney Olympics the recent events in Centennial Park in Atlanta have made this conference very relevant and timely from the viewpoint of Australian law enforcement.

Australian police services and law enforcement agencies, like our counterparts overseas, are feeling the effects of active and sophisticated organised crime groups and gangs engaged in drug abuse and trafficking, innovative forms of money laundering, extortion, corruption, smuggling, wide spread violent crimes and fraud. In endeavouring to equip our personnel to meet these challenges, the issue for governments and police services is the potential for these well financed and

motivated crime groups to destabilise economies and to corrupt the law enforcement and judicial systems so critical to the quality of life which our respective jurisdictions expect and have a right to enjoy.

The solutions to this problem do not lie within the province of any one state or nation—hence the importance of conferences such as this.

It will take the combined effort of all policing and regulatory agencies and governments across all jurisdictions to effectively combat the threat of organised criminal groups to our social and economic structures.

US President Bill Clinton was in Australia recently and addressed our Houses

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of Parliament. During his address he touched on the issues that I have just raised:

*"Make no mistake about it, there is a nexus of new threats—terrorists, rogue states, international criminals, drug traffickers. They too menace our security, and they will do more of it in the new century. They will be all the more lethal if they gain access to weapons of mass destruction, whether nuclear, chemical or biological."*

He called for a concerted strategy on intelligence and police cooperation—worldwide. In particular he identified a need for coordinated legal action in every country to stop money laundering, shutting down grey markets for guns and false documents, and increasing extraditions.

Mr Clinton said the bottom line was for security coordination at our airports and in our airplanes, and giving, each in our own nations, our law enforcement officials the tools they need to cooperate and succeed.

I wholeheartedly endorse Mr Clinton's comments.

In addition to the urgent requirement for new levels of cooperation identified by President Clinton, I see the future for policing as requiring the development of a far higher use of joint agency, multijurisdictional and even international target-directed teams which gather together the best possible mix of skills and resources to deal with the particular problem; and a vastly more effective linking between information and intelligence gathered by patrol officers in the community- and street-policing roles and that gathered or sought by people investigating organised criminal activity; through which more effective longer term strategies are developed.

Partnerships between agencies must be maximised, with a willingness to use joint agency teams and to enhance or where necessary create active information and intelligence links to be the normal way of doing business.

Turning to the subject matter of this conference, bombs are still the preferred weapon of the terrorist, whether the motive be political change, creating a separate nation, or just the destruction of an enemy. More frequently we see criminals turning to explosive violence. The booby trapping of drug plantations, drug laboratories and store houses is a risk frequently

faced by our police officers. Outlaw motorcycle gangs use explosives as part of their culture and, as we saw in Scandinavia this year, they are willing to use bombs to harm people and premises, to protect their activities, and to murder their competitors.

The ABDC has responsibility for the provision of central support to Australian state and territory law enforcement agencies and, where possible, providing assistance to local and overseas agencies.

Often when bomb technicians and bomb data centres gather, the main focus of attention is on the terrorist. While we in Australia are interested in the motives, methods and attacks of the politically motivated terrorist, I would ask you in your discussions to also consider the international element of criminal bombings—the illegal drug industry; the outlaw motorcycle gangs; organised crime; and the transfer of information on bomb making between countries.

Even events which we individually believe may be home-grown and localised may have international roots or repercussions: the animal rights groups; the growth of survivalist groups; and the sarin gas attack in Tokyo that was rehearsed on a farm in Western Australia, are examples of international incidents.

This last example, the Aum Shinriko Sect, is a chilling example of the criminal threat identified by President Clinton.

The Sect was actively involved in stockpiling weapons of mass destruction. They already had the means to produce; and disseminate chemical weapons such as sarin gas. And we now know they were actively involved in developing biological and nuclear weapons.

It was by sheer good fortune that the havoc and terror planned by the sect, was not fully realised.

This then is the criminal environment facing us now.

Bomb protection has many elements: adequate design and construction of facilities; effective procedures and plans; trained security staff; and of course those human beings who have to disarm the bombs that are found. All these aspects rest on the premise of adequate threat identification and risk assessment based on relevant information and intelligence.

