

Commissioner's Message



This edition of *Platypus* – the first for 2008 – has a distinct international theme, reflecting the AFP's expanding responsibilities in the international arena, particularly following the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

Australian governments continue to place great importance on countering terrorism in our region and the AFP is at the centre of these efforts.

On 13 February 1978, a bomb exploded at the Hilton Hotel in Sydney during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting, killing three people. In response, the Australian Government decided to amalgamate the Commonwealth Police and the ACT Police on 19 October 1979. The Federal Bureau of Narcotics became a part of the AFP on 7 November 1979.

In the aftermath of the bombing, it was quickly recognised that there was a need for a centre to record and collate data on bomb-related incidents. Just five months after the Hilton Hotel bombing, in July 1978, the Australian Bomb Data Centre (ABDC) was formally established.

The ABDC makes an important contribution to Australia's regional counter-terrorism capacity building responsibilities, and the centre's expertise as bomb experts has been on display during a number of significant international deployments, including both Bali bombings and the bombing of the Australian Embassy in Jakarta in 2004.

It is often easy to dwell on bad times, forgetting the many successes we have enjoyed as an organisation. One such moment of triumph for the AFP came in February this year when an important cultural artefact – a 15th century map

of the world – was returned to Spain after an exhaustive, multi-jurisdictional investigation.

Although the AFP played only a small role in recovering the map following its theft from the Spanish National Library in Madrid in August 2007, our contribution was nonetheless significant. Through cooperation with the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and with NSW Police, the fragile 526-year-old map was successfully recovered from a Sydney gallery and presented to the Ambassador for Spain Antonio Cosano, for its safe return to Spain.

This edition of *Platypus* also celebrates three significant anniversaries for the international law enforcement community. Firstly, on 20 February this year, the AFP marked the first anniversary of Australia entering into operational and strategic agreements with Europol. This agreement has strengthened Australia's ability to successfully fight transnational crime in our region, including terrorism.

I was proud to be able to join with the Director-General of Europol, Max-Peter Ratzel, in The Hague last year to sign this historic agreement on behalf of the AFP.

Secondly, this year we celebrate the

60th anniversary of the formation of an important strategic relationship in international policing for Australia. In 1948, at the General Assembly of the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC) held in Prague, Australia became a member country. In 1956, the ICPC became known as Interpol, however the organisations goals have remained consistent: to foster international police cooperation and prevent international crime. A number of high-profile Australian cases have involved Interpol's assistance, including the hunt for failed businessman Christopher Skase and the murder of British tourist Peter Falconio.

Finally, on behalf of the AFP, I would like to congratulate the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in this, its centennial year. From a modest beginning with 34 investigators in 1908, the FBI has grown to more than 30,000 members today. The AFP's history of cooperation and collaboration with the FBI is a long and varied one, involving investigation of a range of crimes, in recent years involving terrorism and hunting child-sex offenders.

I am looking forward to another year of great achievements for the AFP.

Mick Keelty APM

AFP Commissioner