



# Bridging the divides

A new Protection Assessment Team will significantly enhance the type of information AFP officers are given to plan operations.

National Manager Protection Michael Outram has been on a “bit of a journey” since he arrived at the AFP late in 2011. As an observer in Canberra of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Perth last year he says he was impressed by the efforts of AFP members across the portfolio. CHOGM proved to be just one of a series of operations over the next weeks and months of high-profile visits that included Queen Elizabeth and US President Barack Obama.

During this series of operations, Assistant Commissioner Outram says one issue did often raise itself. He says planning was mainly based on broad, long-term threat assessments. He adds that these assessments are important indicators of general security threats over the longer period.

Even so, his concern was that national threat assessments avoid getting into the degree of detail needed to make sound operational decisions and plans. This was further highlighted during some of the major operations and events in which the AFP was involved. The new Protection Assessment Team is designed to significantly improve the level of information Protection planners and operational officers have at their fingertips.

Assistant Commissioner Outram says better information is the solution. “Our people on the ground

sometimes hadn’t been provided with the information I think they needed and should have been provided with to inform their operational decisions at the time.”

The problem with threat assessments, he says, is that they are used to inform strategic level planning for six to 12 months ahead and they usually confine their scope to a particular threat, theme or context. They are not designed to inform officers about the day-to-day incidental risks that may be playing out on the ground at a tactical or operational level.

Assistant Commissioner Outram says while terrorism is a significant threat, other issues are equally important for Protection operations.

“If a high-office holder decides on a particular day of the week to go to a particular part of Melbourne to do something, then a national threat assessment is not going to tell you very much.

“What you need to know is whether there is anything specific that relates to the times and places a high-office holder visits. That could relate to crime, to protests, to infrastructure, to fixated persons and other related things.

“That risk – if there is a risk – might also materialise very shortly before or during an event. How do you monitor that? So that, in essence, is what we mean when we say we are moving from a threat-based to a risk-based approach; it is about providing a far more



operational, fast-moving, 360-degree view of what is happening on the ground and enables us to set our stall out more effectively.”

Since arriving at the AFP, Assistant Commissioner Outram’s journey has taken him to Britain. He was aware that the British Metropolitan Police had encountered a similar problem in its evolution of protection operations. He visited Britain with AFP Commander Close Protection Jamie Strauss.

In a pivotal moment for British Protection officers, the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall were ambushed in December 2010 by protesters at Leicester Square. The protesters had rallied during the day against the rise of university fees in the UK. What authorities didn’t know was that a splinter group of protesters had remained in the city. When the Royal couple arrived at a well-publicised gala event the protesters very nearly entered the vehicle.

“That has been a big wakeup call for the police in the last three years in their Protection area,” Assistant Commissioner Outram says. “We essentially benchmarked with the London Met and had a look at what they had been doing. They have been on their own journey.”

He says the Met have been very effective in influencing the British whole-of-government architecture. They are now at a point where the

## National doctrine makes ‘common’ sense

The spirit of collaboration between Commonwealth, state and territory law enforcement and security agencies is laying the foundations for a common doctrine for dignitary protection across the nation.

National Manager Protection Michael Outram says new initiatives will enhance the protection already provided to dignitaries and other high-office holders.

“The National Counter Terrorism Committee (NCTC) Dignitary Protection Working Group and its members are developing a doctrine for protective security operations around dignitaries nationally,” Assistant Commissioner Outram said.

Meanwhile, common training across jurisdictions is already greatly increasing interoperability between the states, territories and national agencies.

The AFP hosted the fourth annual NCTC Dignitary Protection Skills Enhancement Course at its Majura facility in Canberra earlier this year.

Former Capability Adviser for the NCTC Dignitary Protection Capability, Western Australian Police Inspector Barry Shelton, said the course was an important element in maintaining consistency and interoperability between jurisdictions and other selected agencies.

“It is very important to get national consistency and interoperability where people can be deployed into any jurisdiction to assist the host jurisdiction in a dignitary protection operation,” Inspector Shelton said.

Inspector Shelton added that the course covered all aspects of dignitary protection planning and included case studies and scenario training.

“Given that Australia will host the G20 Forum in 2014 it is important that officers can deploy into any jurisdiction and officers understand each other’s methods and you have consistent standard operating procedures.”

Senior Sergeant John Hodge, Queensland Police, has taken over as the new Dignitary Protection Capability Adviser from Inspector Shelton and the AFP’s Federal Agent David Pruckner is now Assistant Capability Adviser.

Federal Agent Pruckner also chairs the NCTC working group, which consists of a representative from each jurisdiction including the ADF Military Police.



AFP members at CHOGM, Perth 2011.

responsibility for protecting high-office holders is shared by a number of agencies, including the Met. The links between policing, policy and protocol are far more clearly understood and managed.

Just as important, there is a very clear understanding of what risk is and how to define and monitor that risk. A crucial difference in thinking is the type of intelligence and situational awareness that Protection officers are provided with to plan operations. Additionally, operational teams are updated with real-time information, which includes feeds from social and other electronic media sources.

Assistant Commissioner Outram has started the AFP's own evolution to what he calls an all-hazards risk approach. Approval from the Portfolio Budget Management Committee was granted in May to establish the new Protection Assessment Team and recruiting for the team has started.

Assistant Commissioner Outram says this "modest capability" will contain intelligence analysts, sworn police officers and protective service officers. He has also sought funding for contributions from intelligence officers. The new team will essentially migrate

operational methodology to a risk-based all-hazards model. This initiative will develop in conjunction with work that the AFP is undertaking at a national level with the Attorney General's Department (Security Coordination Branch) and National Counter Terrorism Committee (Dignitary Protection Working Group).

"I am looking for the ability to collect information and to get it to our people really quickly so they can have really good situational awareness. That's the bottom line. In doing so, it's important that our 800 or so people in Protection become proactive in collecting and sharing information". He says the approach is in line with one of the AFP's seven strategic principles that operations are intelligence led and risk-based.

"It's right to ground what we do in terms of risk management practices, but I think this is about creating situational awareness. It is far more real-time, far more down on the ground and doesn't necessarily correlate with threat assessments."

A transition plan has been developed and will be implemented over the next 18 months. Assistant Commissioner Outram says he hopes to "land" in a place where, like other portfolios, a fully developed



Targeted security assessments will better inform day-to-day action on the ground at important infrastructure such as Government House in Canberra.



High-office holders and close proximity of the population creates planning complexity for Protection operations.

doctrine exists on how Protection operations should be conducted in the AFP.

In the next 12 months he hopes to complete an important first step in that transition and develop standard operating procedures for the Protection Assessment Team. That will detail what the team should look like and what processes will be put in place.

“So it is very much a small first step,” he says. “At the moment it’s a team on paper. After the end of 12 months we will evaluate that, see how effective it has been and whether it is adding value to the business. If it is adding value then we may have to look at it and keep it the same, increase it or change it.”



Generic, longer-term, threat-based security assessments cannot adequately inform day-to-day planning for complex operations such as Queen Elizabeth’s Royal Visit in 2011.