



The AFP marks the 20th anniversary to Mozambique in 2014.

AFP marks 20 years in Mozambique

The Deployment of AFP members to Mozambique in March 1994 followed many years of civil war that all but destroyed the country.

The Australians were one of the first contingents of UN civilian police to arrive in country in March 1994. Even though 14 months had passed since the first UN military personnel arrived, there was little infrastructure in place when the Australian police deployed.

In the midst of huge logistical challenges, the contingent was split into pairs and sent to a number of different regions, often far from the capital, Maputo.

In some cases AFP members set up police stations, engaging local translators to assist. Australian police often took on leadership roles far beyond their substantive rank.

Constable (now Commander) Rob Gilliland and Sergeant Rick Smeltink, members of the second AFP contingent, were posted to Nampula, in northern Mozambique.

Sergeant Smeltink says “I couldn’t believe it”.

“On arrival I was placed in the regional command centre...I went from the radio room, to the operations room, to being the commander in two weeks,” Sergeant Smeltink recalls.

Members had to be highly adaptable and resourceful. Conditions were tough, accommodation was very basic and food was either army ration packs, going over the border to Malawi or Zimbabwe for supplies,



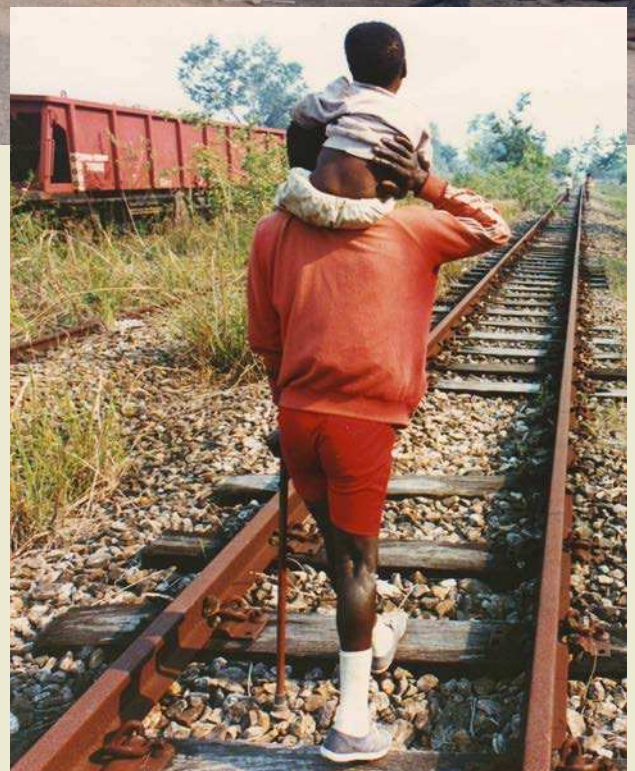
The challenges in Mozambique have provided immense professional benefits to AFP members who have deployed there.

or running the gauntlet of local 'restaurants'. Water was not suitable for drinking and many members experienced serious bacterial infections and some contracted Malaria.

Land mines were a serious hazard. During the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ), which ran from December 1992 to December 1994, a total of 26 UN personnel were killed, including two civilian police. Many of these, and countless injuries to local people, were caused by mines or improvised explosive devices left in situ after the conflict.

However, some members still consider themselves lucky to have deployed to Mozambique despite all the challenges and the risks they faced.

A number credit the experience with the sort of accelerated professional and personal development that could not have been achieved by any role they could have fulfilled at the time in Australia.



UN civilian police needed to be adaptable to overcome basic infrastructure.