

TARGET: A KILLER

— International call for aid

By Keith Livingston

IN July 1988, the Australian Federal Police received a request from Winnipeg City Police, Canada, for assistance in tracing a person they were seeking in relation to a particularly vicious murder.

The Winnipeg police had notified the Australian Federal Police that the person being sought by them, a young Canadian citizen of Chinese/Vietnamese origin, might be living in Australia and asked that his whereabouts be determined with a view to possible extradition to face charges in Canada.

The Canadians believed the man (now aged 18, but 17 years at the time of the alleged offence) had been granted residency status in Australia, with his mother, in May 1988.

Canadian authorities advised they had been investigating the February 1988 murder by shooting of 53-year-old Emil Bertschinger, the owner/manager of a Winnipeg chicken processing plant. Their target was one of about 350 Vietnamese employees working at the factory.

Knife wounds

It was established that Mr Bertschinger was well liked and much respected by his employees as he had been of great assistance to them in providing jobs and helpful advice.

Winnipeg Police also discovered it was widely known that the victim was in the practice of keeping weekend takings on the premises.

Investigations into his death showed Mr Bertschinger had been tied up, then tortured by his assailants in their bid to locate the money.

Several small knife wounds had been inflicted about the head by intruders who were disturbed by him as they attempted to find the money.

Inquiries about the man, involving his relatives still living in Canada, gave Australian Federal Police Southern Region a starting point.

The information resulted in Constable Steve Prousalukas concentrating on a Housing Commission block of flats at Abbotsford, in Melbourne's inner suburbs.

Surveillance was mounted on the



Constable Steve Prousalukas.

flats where it was believed the target was living with his mother, his sister and her family.

There was considerable difficulty in making a positive identification as the flats also provided accommodation to many members of the Vietnamese community, many of whom were in the same age grouping as the target.

The life-style of the wanted man indicated he did not spend every day or night at the flats. He was also enrolled as a student at the Collingwood Education Centre, but his attendance record there was quite unpredictable.

Waiting game

The detectives achieved a breakthrough when it was established that the wanted man was receiving Austudy benefits and withdrew money from his account at a specific bank each fortnight. This it was thought, if all else failed, would at least enable them to maintain a trace on their target every two weeks.

Having now established that the target could be intercepted, the detectives notified their Winnipeg counterparts and started the waiting game until detectives and paperwork arrived from Canada.

Before the arrival of both, Federal

Police concerns were aroused when their target failed to return to the Education Centre at the end of the two-week September school holidays. It was also revealed he had withdrawn money from his savings account at a different branch of the bank.

Federal Police were now faced with the fact their target had not only changed an established pattern of behaviour, but additional information indicated he may have even left the State.

The decision was taken to establish surveillance at the two bank branches now known to have been used by the man to access his savings account.

Perseverance paid off, as the man did return to withdraw money at the second bank.

Arrangements were made with the responsible authority for the continuance of Austudy payments to enable Federal Police to maintain a trace on him through his access to the account into which the benefit was being paid.

The Canadian detectives arrived, but it was revealed there had been an unfortunate delay in the paperwork necessary for extradition.

Into the open

Shortly after came news that an efficient worker at Austudy, unaware of the continuing benefits arrangement, stopped payments into the target's account. (Her checks had shown he was no longer attending courses).

This was discovered after 'pay day' when no attempt was made on the part of the target to access his bank account.

Inquiries revealed virtually no funds were left to withdraw, due to the cessation of benefits. This gave rise to fears that the tenuous trace being maintained may now be lost altogether.

The Canadian detectives were still waiting 'in the wings' and with the arrival of the necessary paperwork for extradition imminent, the head of the AFP team, Detective Sergeant John Barnes, worked on a plan to bring their man into the open. It was decided that undercover detectives, working as

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Housing Commission officials, would approach the flat where it was thought their target was living on a part time basis.

Despite language difficulties, they were able to establish with those occupying the flat that the man they were seeking stayed overnight 'sometimes'. They advised the occupiers that he should meet with them the next morning at a specific time.

Next day, the detectives returned to the flat at the predetermined time and asked to speak with the man. He was there, and was asked to accompany them outside, where he was placed under arrest.

Signed statement

The target was taken to AFP headquarters for questioning by Detective Sergeant Barnes.

After ensuring the wanted man was fully aware of his rights, permission was sought from him for the Canadians to conduct a record of interview. He agreed.

With Constable Prousialkas, now adopting an observer role to ensure Australian law was adhered to, the Canadians proceeded with the interview and obtained a signed statement.

The investigation culminated in several court appearances and the eventual extradition of the man to Winnipeg to face a charge of murder in the first degree.

An alleged accomplice also has been charged by Canadian Police with first degree murder in relation to Mr Bertschinger's death.

FOOTNOTE: Constable Steve Prousialkas is a Case Officer who was attached to this investigation throughout its duration. His dedication to duty and investigative abilities displayed in this inquiry earned him several accolades from his superior officers, including the Assistant Commissioner, Southern Region. •

CROSS-COUNTRY TITLES

The Australasian Police Cross Country Championships will be held in Canberra on Saturday 24 June 1989.

The Championship is an annual footrace in which police from the Australian State forces, AFP and New Zealand compete for the Wormalds Security team shields and other prizes.

This year AFP members will conduct the race over a 5 km loop in Grevillea Park in the East Basin of Lake Burley Griffin. Male competi-

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\$1.5m STAGE AT MAJURA READY

THE second stage in the development of the AFP's 200 hectare Majura complex is now complete. At a cost of a further \$1.5 million, the complex now has a vehicle manoeuvring/wet area 250m by 100m and associated approach roads, eight dog kennels, new office space and a new garage/maintenance shed.

The quarry area which provided the road base material has been trimmed to create an excellent trail bike and 4WD training area, complete with water hazards.

Mr Frank Brown, project officer for the development of the complex, said eventually much more of the AFP's resources would be centrally located at the 204 hectare Majura site.

The next stage would see the completion of the skid pan and basic driver training circuit, and the construction of fuel storage facilities and an undercover parking area.

"We are still awaiting budgetary funding before starting Stage 3," he said.

Move Courses

There are three large classrooms on site, and a variety of other types of courses have been conducted at Majura, such as Surveillance, Firearms, Methods of Instructional Techniques, and Officer Survival courses. The AFP's dog-handlers also are located at Majura.

The Chief Driving Instructor for the AFP, Sergeant Bruce Brown, said the standard of facilities at Majura had fulfilled all the planners' expectations.

"The new site allows students to spend more time behind the wheel,"



Chief Driving Instructor Sergeant Bruce Brown.

he said. "Up to five cars can be on the track performing exercises simultaneously. At the old driver training site at Sutton, only one car at a time was able to use the track.

"We are finding the large manoeuvring area allows us to run exercises we were unable to run there," he said.

Sergeant Brown and his team provide instruction in high speed, 4WD and heavy vehicle driving, motorcycle pursuit and non-pursuit riding, basic close protection driving for escorting VIPs, and evasive manoeuvres driving for surveillance personnel.

Driver training has been conducted for other Government departments, but normally resources are totally committed to AFP training.

Sergeant Brown said Administrative Support Staff in the AFP would soon be undergoing defensive driving courses at Majura.

"There are a lot of public service personnel driving AFP vehicles in the course of their work," he said. "Resources permitting, we'd eventually like to put all staff through such a course. All training is beneficial. No one can ever be over-trained to drive a car."

The Sutton site, occupied by the ACT Bomb Squad, will still be used for some driving courses for a time because it provides a different driving environment and has a skid pan.