



NEW DEFENCES CLO

As drug enforcement agencies world-wide prepare to combat what threatens to be the gravest period yet in the ceaseless fight against illegal narcotics producers and traffickers, Australia has instituted new defences against the possible development of new avenues of supply by the trade.

Recent spectacular narcotics seizures, the result of shrewd police work and international collaboration between drug enforcement agencies, were of the type heralded in a major document issued by the AFP last year, but of which little public note was taken.

The accuracy of the forecasts in the report "Illicit Drugs in Australia: A Situation Report 1989" has come chillingly apparent. The degree of sophistication of drug pedlars has been dramatically proved. That the international community is not absolutely powerless to stem the trade also has been established.

In the report, the AFP warned that the trafficking of declared narcotics and other illicit substances into Australia continued to increase.

"During 1988 and into 1989, Australian law enforcement agencies have achieved some major drug seizures," the report said.

"There is no evidence, however, that such seizures have had a major impact on the availability of drugs in Australia, although occasional shortages of cannabis have probably reflected law enforcement action against domestic cannabis plantations.

"Significantly, the amount of cocaine seized also has risen and, given the increased demand for stimulants generally, the trend toward larger sized importations is likely to continue."

Record heroin crop

There are several complicated factors behind what the drug enforcement agencies believe will be a record heroin crop this year.

In Afghanistan, following the withdrawal of Soviet troops, farmers impoverished by years of war looked to a fast-growing profitable cash crop. The virtual breakdown of law and order outside the major towns in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, led to ideal



Australia's protection from drugs begins with collaboration with overseas authorities from the moment the illicit drug seeds are planted until their produce is refined and sent into the streets.

circumstances for the cultivation of the poppy in an area where it was traditionally grown but under official harassment.

In war-torn Lebanon, drugs are another quick-profit cash crop while the AFP has reports that the army is heavily engaged in the trade in Syria.

Drugs, mainly cocaine, reach Australia also from South America where President George Bush recently took his fight against the fastest-growing threat against the United States short of nuclear war.

The amount of heroin seized in Australia in 1988 was more than 96kg or some 60 per cent more than in the previous year even though the number

of seizures was about the same.

Cannabis also continued to reach Australia partly as the result of life being made difficult for domestic producers and partly to satisfy demand for the higher-quality imported product.

Ideal targets

On the positive side there was little evidence of the arrival of the cult drug 'Crack' despite a spate of scare stories in the media. The AFP experts believe, in fact, that the plethora of horror stories about the drug possibly had the valued effect of warning potential Australian users off it.

Isolated though it is from the main world centres of population, Australia is nevertheless a rich target for narcotics pedlars because of its relatively liberal lifestyle and because of the affluence of its people. Because of their relaxed attitudes as well as their money, Australians are seen as ideal targets for the perfidious trade.

Some economists have estimated that very large components of our adverse trade balance might be traceable to payments for illicit narcotics shipments.

There is very little drug production in Australia apart from marihuana and some of the synthetic 'designer' drugs, production of which is measurable by

ILLICIT DRUGS IN AUSTRALIA

- A SITUATION
REPORT

AFP Liaison Officers meet

tracking the chemicals from which they are composed.

The narcotics with which international criminal elements want to attack particularly our youth have to be imported. Again, fortunately, we have only the two 'barriers' — sea and air, to contend with but it's enough with one of the world's longest continuously-navigable coastlines.

Regular couriers

Contrary to televised fiction, most of the marihuana smuggled into Australia comes by ship and most of that by regular commercial craft. Another component is brought in on private pleasure craft and yachts. The most often used system of sending heroin and cocaine in is by the postal service, the use of airline passengers as couriers being the least used and the least reliable — no matter how pretty the courier.

There is still sufficient profit in the trade to encourage the use of couriers on a regular basis but their apprehension rate is reportedly high.

Australia's main concern for its own protection at present is stemming the flow of narcotics into the country and this we do by a variety of methods which begin in collaboration with overseas authorities from virtually the moment the illicit drug seeds are planted until their produce is refined and sent into the streets.

It's a battle of surveillance and intelligence in a vicious war which the drug lords wage against each other as freely as against the conscience of the world.

With the national strategic scenario showing no likelihood of any plausible threat to our national security within the foreseeable future it's also a war which is actively waged against us every day — the more insidiously because it knows no Geneva Convention nor any other of the Rules of War.

It's a war which is waged around the clock and around the world. It's a war also in which our relative isolation has proved no total barrier to the assault upon our way of life.

It's a war as well which the enforcement agencies are determined that we will continue to wage until we win.

Training for overseas service, language proficiency and training assistance to host countries were among a wide range of subjects discussed by Overseas Liaison Officers at the 1990 conference held in Bangkok from 7-8 February.

Liaison officers from 11 posts were in Bangkok for the conference, which also was attended by Assistant Commissioner (Investigations) Peter Lamb and Commander (International Division) Lloyd Worthy from Headquarters.

Assistant Secretary Projects, Mr John Ireland, addressed officers on changes in the AFP and the newly-introduced

Performance Management Plan.

Officers present were: Superintendent Steve Polden, Liaison Co-ordinator Bangkok; Superintendent David Schramm, SLO Buenos Aires; Superintendent Chris Eriksen, Liaison Co-ordinator Hong Kong; Superintendent Joe McKirdy, SLO Islamabad; Superintendent Terry Butler, LO Kuala Lumpur; Superintendent Alan Sing, Liaison Co-ordinator, London; Superintendent Denis Craft, SLO Los Angeles; Superintendent John Robinson, SLO Manila; Superintendent Tim Egan, LO Nicosia; Superintendent Steve Flegg, LO Singapore; and Superinten-

Continued on page 9



At the Liaison Officers' conference table, Bangkok. From top left, Superintendent Joe McKirdy, Superintendent Terry Butler, Mr John Ireland (partially obscured), Superintendent Chris Eriksen, Superintendent Mike Phelan, Superintendent Steve Polden and Sergeant Ken Davis, partially obscured by Assistant Commissioner Peter Lamb. Left foreground is Commander Lloyd Worthy.



The other side of the table. From left, Superintendent Tim Egan, Superintendent David Schramm, Superintendent John Robinson, Superintendent Denis Craft, Superintendent Steve Flegg and, partially obscured at the far end, Superintendent Alan Sing.