

An isthmus to South American law enforcement

The AFP's liaison post in Colombia plays a vital role in linking together information and resources for police investigating crimes with connections to South America.

The AFP's Senior Liaison Officer (SLO) to Colombia's capital Bogota has nearly 50 countries under his watch. David Nelson is responsible for liaising with other law enforcement agencies in these countries to progress matters on behalf of Australian police, and works closely with Sascha Austin, the only other AFP member at the post.

He believes developing relationships with local and regional law enforcement agencies is critical to a post's success, even if you can't always meet regional contacts face-to-face.

SLO Nelson said his experiences during a previous posting, as well as the work he is doing in South America, show that local law enforcement agencies are willing to support their international colleagues. He said it's the spirit of cooperation which brings success.

"The Bogota post has developed a vast network of law enforcement contacts across the region," he said.

"This has enabled us to collect actionable intelligence which has previously led to narcotic

seizures in Australia. And it will continue to allow the AFP to proactively investigate crimes that impact upon our interests."

The AFP's Bogota Post is an essential link between investigations taking place in Australia and South America. It is responsible for progressing matters on behalf of Australian law enforcement with connections to the region, which includes South and Central America and the Caribbean.

"Unquestionably the AFP's presence and role in the region helps us to proactively

identify and investigate criminal syndicates targeting Australia," SLO Nelson said.

And with the world's cocaine supplies coming from Colombia, Peru and Bolivia, SLO Nelson said the post is well placed to engage with the AFP's international partners in fighting the organised crime cartels which traffic the drug.

One element of this cooperation is the AFP's sponsorship of a Transnational Crime Team within the Colombian Department of Administrative Security. This team provides close



01: View of the Colombian capital, Bogota.



02: Map showing Bogota. **03:** Street scene showing one of Bogota's many historical churches. **04, 05 - 06:** A recent operation involving the AFP's Bogota post led to the arrest of 22 Australians, two men from Peru and a Colombian on drug trafficking charges.

operational support to the AFP and is an important resource which assists in Australian investigations offshore.

In addition to drug-related matters, the AFP's Bogota post also investigates crimes such as people smuggling via commercial airlines, tax fraud, money laundering, identity crime, online child sexual abuse and child sex tourism. Bogota also provides ongoing assistance and advice to five Australian Missions in Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Trinidad and Tobago.

The Colombian office is an ideal location for the AFP, as it provides a regional base in close proximity to Central America and the Caribbean. SLO Nelson said this is an advantage during investigations into the routes being used by drug traffickers to get cocaine through the region and into Australia.

The success of inter-agency collaborations was recently demonstrated during an investigation into a trafficking syndicate with members in Australia, Colombia, Argentina and Peru.

"This investigation required considerable coordination to ensure evidence was captured in a number of jurisdictions. The investigation led to the arrest of four alleged offenders in three countries," SLO Nelson said.

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