



On stable ground

When Detective Sergeant Steve Mellick talks to his colleagues back at AFP Headquarters, the agency’s crucial role in stabilising troubled overseas nations is foremost on the agenda.

As the AFP secondee to the Australian Civil-Military Centre (ACMC) in Queanbeyan, it is his job to help the AFP – and other Australian government agencies – to develop a combined national capacity to deal with post-conflict ‘security sector reform’.

“Put simply,” Detective Sergeant Mellick says, “security sector reform is where you are transitioning away from a military-led conflict. It’s a situation where the environment that you’re operating in looks less like a military environment and more like a civilian one.”

The term ‘security sector’ is a collective name for the range of agencies involved in the security of a nation. This includes law enforcement, the armed forces, intelligence services, customs, justice and penal institutions. The aim of the ACMC is, through research and collaborative discussion, to recommend an interagency strategy to enable the AFP and partner Australian agencies to respond when an overseas security sector can no longer effectively provide democratic order.



AFP members and Australian Military Police work together in Dili, Timor Leste, as an estimated 3000 protesters enter the city. *Photo by Leading Aircraftman Rodney Welch*

He says the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) is a classic example of “a great model of cooperation” between government agencies.

“RAMSI really is the poster child for international assistance being provided to another state from a range of government agencies – and there are also regional partners, particularly in terms of the community policing, mentoring and capacity building role.”

Essentially then, the APMC is tasked with supporting Australia’s civil, military and police capabilities to prevent, prepare for and respond to conflicts and disasters overseas. The AFP has provided a direct contribution to the centre since it opened in 2008.

To achieve its aim, the APMC is divided into three key directorates: Concepts, Capabilities and Outreach. Detective Sergeant Mellick has been involved mainly with security sector reform issues since January this year. This means he works in and takes a lead role in ‘Civil-Military Concepts’ directorate.

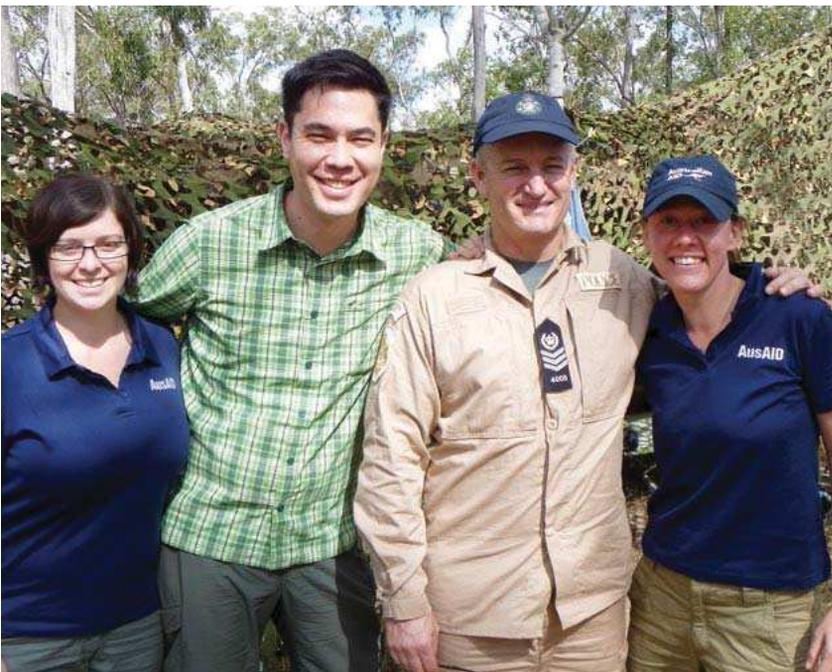
His role is a broad and complex church of responsibilities. As the sole AFP representative, his job is to act as a liaison officer for the AFP, coordinating engagement with whole-of-government partners and providing subject matter expertise relating to the security sector. His work in Civil-Military Concepts dovetails into the work done by the other directorates. Civil-Military Capabilities focuses on preparedness, planning, ‘lessons learnt’ and research. Civil-Military Outreach delivers training and education to the APMC’s key partners.

Even so, the APMC does not have a direct mandate in terms of a policy or a statutory requirement to enforce recommendations. In essence, the centre is like a think tank for developing best-practice doctrine and further supports the agencies in their offshore roles. In the end, the decisions made are up to the individual agency.

“We therefore work alongside principal government agencies whose mandate it is to do these security sector reforms, particularly as it relates to conflict and disaster management offshore,” Detective Sergeant Mellick says.



Australian Civil-Military Centre staff in August. From left, Australian Council for International Development secondee Susan Hutchison, AFP secondee Detective Sergeant Steve Mellick, Executive Director Dr Alan Ryan, Australian Agency for International Development Humanitarian Advisor Philippa Nicholson and Military Advisor Colonel Rowan Martin.



Australian Government representatives attached to 3rd Brigade during Exercise Talisman Saber 2013. From left, Australian Agency for International Development's (AusAID) Shannon Rooney, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Marcus Wu, AFP secondee to ACMC Detective Sergeant Steve Mellick and AusAID's Lara Franzen.

"We can say 'OK, this is your domain – we're going to help you in that domain and these are the things we can assist you with'. We can then come together as a whole-of-government to share an understanding of security sector reform and then understand that there is a better way of doing business together."

Interoperability

The key principle at the heart of the ACMC is interoperability. Before 2008, Detective Sergeant Mellick says, responses to overseas conflicts were largely undertaken separately by each of the Australian government agencies. "That's part and parcel why the ACMC was brought into being," he says. It was the very disconnection between agencies during operations that highlighted the need for better coordination and understanding. The AFP United Nations experience in Timor Leste was a classic example.

The AFP's present National Manager Crime Operations Steve Lancaster has highlighted this point in his own accounts of operations in Timor Leste. Assistant Commissioner Lancaster deployed to Timor Leste in 2006 as Commander Operation Serene. He says it was a very complex operational environment, which also included a separate, pre-existing United Nations mission.

"It was a very complex challenge before us," he says. Just to add to the complexity, the Australian agencies involved did not have the time to conduct predeployment training.

"It wasn't just Australian troops or police. There were also other bilateral arrangements with Portugal, Malaysia and New Zealand as well," Assistant Commissioner Lancaster says. "So it was quite a complex quilt of several countries along with the police and the military."

The Australian police (AFP and state police) were the first law enforcement agencies in the operational area. They quickly had to restore law and order but also had to work with the many other agencies there to help.

"There was a lot of pressure on us to start doing things but also working within the complex arrangements with the army in the coordination, command and control context, which is actually quite difficult.

"RAMSI really is the poster child for international assistance..."

“So it took a lot of coordination and cooperation with the military and we, of course, had to work with the local East Timorese Government to ensure that we were consistent with their views – it was their country.”

It was this situation that led to the whole-of-government initiative that would produce the ACMC. Not surprisingly, Detective Sergeant Mellick says understanding the common goals of other agencies is paramount. A large part of that means coordination and liaison.

This begins with weekly contact with the AFP’s International Deployment Group (IDG) to maintain operational awareness of policing issues. “I use the meetings to keep the IDG across what the centre is doing, what the initiatives are and new directions, so I can be joined up to the other efforts - and other government agencies, of course.

“I rely heavily on the wider network and understanding of the AFP Operations Committee and the IDG Executive in terms of where we undertake mission deployments across the globe. I talk to all of the coordinators that represent AFP interests in Asia, Afghanistan, Domestic and Rest of World, and the AFP’s Pacific Police Development Program.”

He is also in contact with AFP-Australian Defence Force liaison officers at the Headquarters Joint Operations Committee at Bungendore, near Canberra, and the United Nations.

Far and wide: missions and exercises

It has been a steep learning curve for Detective Sergeant Mellick. To begin with, and, to better understand and work with the ADF, Detective Sergeant Mellick attended the ADF’s demanding Australian Command and Staff College 46-week program in Canberra before starting at the ACMC. He says it has given him an important grounding in the large and complex ADF organisation.

As a primary and complex operational organisation in conflict zones, he says the understanding of the ADF has been insightful. He says from Cyprus to Vanuatu and Afghanistan to Sudan, the AFP has been involved in a myriad of missions and exercises in the civil-military arena. He adds that his own experience on the recent Exercise Talisman Saber has also added to his



Members of the AFP Specialist Response Group deliver an up-skilling course in public order management to members of the Vanuatu Police Force.



AFP member Federal Agent Bob Tait, left, works with Australian and Afghan military members in Afghanistan. *Photo by Sergeant Mick Davis.*

“There was a lot of pressure on us to start doing things...”



AFP members work with the Australian Defence Force in Dili, Timor Leste. Photo by Leading Aircraftman Rodney Welch.

understanding – and the absolute need for – police-military and other agency cooperation.

This year's Talisman Saber, which ended in August, saw the AFP's Protection Liaison, Intelligence Analysts, Airport Uniformed Operations Policing, and High Tech Crime Operations all supporting the ADF and Attorney General's Department with security arrangements.

AFP Manager of Missions Commander Bruce Hill also worked with the Talisman Saber 2013 Crisis Response Coordination Group in Hawaii, providing strategic guidance and managing AFP activities. Detective Sergeant Mellick was also involved in the initial phase of Talisman Saber in Townsville – an experience he appreciated.

"It gave me the opportunity to understand the difference between military planning and police planning – especially as it relates to whole of government," he said.

"I saw what the military needed to do to prepare itself – getting into the theatre of operation and then undertake the clearing, fixing and holding of the

enemy so other government agencies could undertake security and stability operations to engage the fictitious local community.

"To see all that unfold from a police officer's perspective is very interesting. The logistics are enormous."

More research and development of inter-agency cooperation is on the way in the very near future. Between February and May this year, the ACMC studied security sector reform in more detail.

The ACMC's report – *Security Sector Reform in Conflict-Affected States: Environmental Scan and Future Options* – was distributed to key partner agencies. The aim of the research was to understand the international definition of security sector reform – and how it differs from nation to nation.

Detective Sergeant Mellick says the research looked at how security sector reform translates to the Australian experience and vernacular. It also looks at how Australia's government agencies are performing their civil-military-police efforts.



Multiple Australian agencies meet in Tarin Kot, Afghanistan. *Photo by Petty Officer Paul Berry.*

The AFP has also requested the ACMC to undertake specific research to determine the link between aid development and security sector reform – the results of which are expected to be presented by the end of this year.

Detective Sergeant Mellick's secondment at the ACMC ends in early 2014. He says it has been an extremely interesting and rewarding time.

"And as I return to the AFP proper I'll be better equipped to understand the value of partner agencies and how to maximise unity and effort to achieve our goals, particularly in the field of security sector reform."



AFP members Sergeants Annette Outtrim, left, and Leisa James teach interview skills to Afghan Army and police officers at Tarin Kot, Afghanistan.

Photo by Major Chris Linden.