



Gunman Michael Zehaf-Bibeau records a video message moments before the attack.

Make the call

The growing relationship between the AFP and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is embedded in shared experience.

It was just five brief minutes that shocked Canada on 22 October, 2014. The images of gunman Michael Zehaf-Bibeau coldly murdering Canadian soldier Corporal Nathan Cirillo was chilling. Zehaf-Bibeau then drove to Parliament House for a frantic shootout in the home of Canada's Parliament.

Just two days before, lone-actor terrorist Martin Couture-Rouleau injured two Canadian soldiers in a vehicle ramming attack in Quebec. Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent later died of injuries. The similarities between these lone-actor attacks and the Martin Place siege in Sydney highlight the shared problems in countering terrorism.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Superintendent Ches Parsons was invited to Australia to share the RCMP experience. Superintendent Parsons was closely involved in the operational response to Zehaf-Bibeau and presented to AFP members in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne.

While much of the operational detail is still classified, he says the message for the public is clear – 'if you see something suspicious, make the call'. It is known that Zehaf-Bibeau had spoken with members of the public during his bus journey to Ottawa. He had made known his intentions to harm people. But the authorities were not alerted. Superintendent Parsons says people in the public domain should not be dismissive of any suspicious activity.

"He had a criminal record dating back 10 years," Superintendent Parsons says. "If only someone

had made that call. We had intelligence on this guy and could have headed him off at the pass well before it got as bad as it did. Members of the public appear to be reluctant to get involved if they see or hear something that is out of the ordinary or may set the alarm bells ringing".

"If a member of the public hears an individual uttering threats in a public setting towards say any governmental institution around the jihadi theme then the person overhearing those threats should call. Even if they don't have a name, a description is sufficient enough or anything else they can impart."

Five Eyes

The visit by RCMP is also a sign of the growing partnership between the two law enforcement agencies. Both are member countries of the Five Eyes intelligence alliance – the joint intelligence sharing partnership between Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the US.

"It is an extremely important relationship because the Five Eyes countries operate from a very common legal framework and common tradecraft framework," he says. "We are able to lever whatever equities that one country may have that another might not possess and we lever equities into other countries to assist them.

"We generally share our investigative assets and equities between ourselves very well. The

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superintendent Ches Parsons delivers his presentation at AFP headquarters in Canberra.



proverbial line of two heads being better than one applies across the Five Eyes community, in this case, five heads being better than one.

“Working together, leveraging everybody’s assets and equities against the other gives us a better and more effective operational posture and global coverage against what is, in fact, a global threat.”

AFP Counter Terrorism Operations Support (CTOS) in partnership with Learning and Development are responsible for organising the suite of training within the Counter Terrorism Training Program and coordinate visits such as Superintendent Parsons’. Detective Sergeant John McIntyre, Team Leader CTOS, says the Five Eyes partnership does open up an opportunity for the AFP to develop relationships with a chosen partner.

Detective Sergeant McIntyre says the RCMP previously had liaised with Australia through a single member positioned in South East Asia. The RCMP now has one of its members posted to the Canadian High Commission in Canberra.

“It was always a strong relationship and we worked closely with the RCMP in Asian countries as well as here in Australia,” Detective Sergeant McIntyre says. “But with a member now in Australia I think it really solidifies that relationship and I think we have been engaging in Canberra more extensively – including having RCMP members visit Australia on a more regular basis. The RCMP relationship is in fact growing.

Superintendent Parsons believes that a growing partnership is necessary and a natural corollary of the times. “The relationship is very good in my opinion. But it does continue to develop as the threats develop in front of us. In other words, this is about rising to the occasion.”