



Center for Strategic & International Studies
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*Post Conflict Policing and Stabilization Operations:
Challenges in the Asia Pacific Region and the Role of the Australian Federal Police:
A Dialogue with Commissioner Mick Keelty of the Australian Federal Police*

SEPTEMBER 15, 2006

The Transnational Threats Project hosted a dialogue with Mick Keelty, commissioner of the Australian Federal Police (AFP), on September 15, 2006.

Arnaud de Borchgrave, director of the CSIS Transnational Threats Project, opened the event by highlighting the history of cooperation between CSIS and the Australian government. Also attending the dialogue were Dennis Richardson, ambassador of Australia to the United States, and William Sessions, former director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Commissioner Keelty discussed the role of police forces in peacekeeping and stabilization missions. He detailed the history of the AFP's deployment for such missions around the world from Cyprus to Timor-L'este. The AFP has deployed units as small as two persons and as large as a several companies throughout Oceania. The AFP officers are detailed to build, train, and assist local police forces in order to provide safety and stability for the community. The deployed officers develop relationships with the local populace to help cement positive and productive relationships between Australia and its regional partners.

The commissioner described the building of police forces in many developing nations, specifically the Pacific islands. Police forces interact with the public on a daily basis to serve and protect the communities in which they live, while a military force trains to defend the citizens from external threats. In many of these areas, it has been suggested that a gendarmerie may be better suited to the task.

Commissioner Keelty brought attention to the international offices established and maintained by the AFP. The AFP was the first Western police agency to set up offices in China and also has offices in global hot spots from Bogotá, Colombia, to Hanoi, Vietnam. The officers assigned to Amman, Jordan, are currently training Iraqi police officers for duty throughout the nation.

The commissioner discussed the need for more police worldwide. Currently, the AFP has a force size of 5,500 personnel but will expand to around 6,000 within a year with expanded recruiting. AFP officers that have deployed are a valuable resource in training new recruits. The number of recruits is also higher than it has been in recent years, which is encouraging for the commissioner as AFP missions become broader in scope and more geographically distant. They subsequently bring home an expanded perspective of the world, which enables them to serve as better officers and to transfer that experience to their colleagues.