

Analysts sift for gold

By Terry Browne

EASTERN Region Crime Analysis Branch boasts a range of skills that have evolved to meet the needs of criminal investigation in Australia's multicultural society.

The work of the Branch members can be likened to sifting for gold, according to the Officer-in-Charge, Mike McGreevy.

The Branch is the research arm of the Intelligence Division and is responsible for processing relevant information into usable crime intelligence.

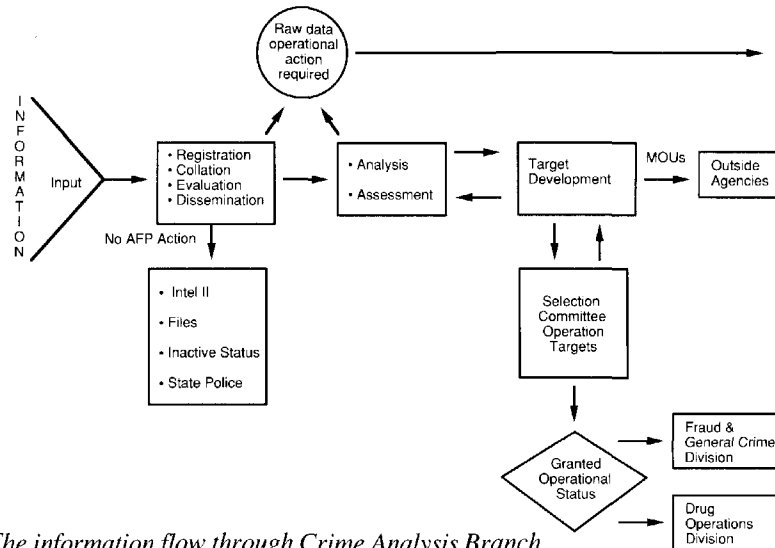
To do this the Branch has three units whose functions vary from collection, sorting and evaluation to full analysis of information on criminal activities.

Mike said the Division's aim is to pass quality intelligence on criminal targets to operational units, so as to make the most efficient use of investigators' time.

The Crime Analysis Branch currently has a staff of 26. Mike said that the Branch is deliberately top heavy with detective sergeants. "Some of our liaison officers are detective sergeants with 14 to 15 years' experience as this is the level of officer they deal with in other agencies." These officers liaise with other State and Federal agencies in an exchange of information, under the strict provisions of the Privacy Act.

Screening of information forms the basis of the Branch's work, with 1300-1700 information requests and 300-400 reports passing through the Branch each month. Written and recorded intelligence collected by investigators is also examined for any information that helps build up the profile of a crime, a criminal or a crime syndicate. Increasingly, criminal analysis requires language skills.

Staff members with analyst training and foreign language skills supplement the Branch's solid base of police investigative experience, enabling the Branch to process intelligence on a full range of criminal activities, no matter what the country of origin.



The information flow through Crime Analysis Branch

Detective Constable Lindy Pettit pointed out that even in the English language investigators have trouble keeping up with the 'street talk' and colloquialisms. She says her 14 years' experience in fraud and drug investigation helps her to identify intelligence that will be of most use to operational investigators. Lindy said she is able to keep in touch with changes in the language because investigators seem to adopt street expressions and use them in the office.

Branch members with foreign language skills are the first to deny the 'expert' tag. For most, their language skills were acquired incidentally while pursuing education in other fields.

A detective constable, who holds a degree in physics from Sydney University, learned Italian as a family language. He said, "The secret of good foreign language analysis is knowing when to call for outside help. My family is from Italy's north; southern dialects are totally different." He says that nationally certified interpreters are used to ensure that a translation will stand up in court.

John Wu, currently an acting senior analyst, spent a year learning German at Bonn University. A graduate of Sydney University,

with post graduate studies at the University of NSW, John's first language is Japanese. Apart from fluent English he is also able to converse in French, Mandarin and Cantonese. He says that a good knowledge of the culture behind a language is an important key to good analysis technique. John is currently working towards a PhD.

Being in the right place at the right time proved to be a turning point in Dorothy Chong's AFP career. Dorothy, originally from Malaysia, was employed in general administrative duties when called on to help when a Hong Kong man appeared at ER headquarters waving a newspaper picture of a senior AFP officer. As a result of her interpreting skills, Operation 'Soy' was born, an operation which resulted in a major drug investigation and seizure by Eastern Regions' Drug Operations Division.

Speaking Malay, Hakka, Cantonese and Mandarin, Dorothy was assisting John Wu on a report on Malaysian and Singaporean criminal activities in NSW when Dr Victor Chang was gunned down in Sydney in 1991. The report proved useful to NSW Police investigating the crime.

Pichaed Tangvisethpat came to Australia in 1980 and first worked

for the AFP as an interpreter on Operation 'Toggle' in 1981. He then worked on a casual basis for the AFP and spent some time with the NCA before starting full-time with the AFP in 1988. Originally from Thailand, he holds a Veterinary Science degree and speaks the Chinese dialect Chiu Chow as well as Mandarin, Cantonese and Lao-tian.

With six years' experience as a lieutenant in the Turkish National Police, Alpagut Cagatay majored in Political Science and International Relations at the University of Ankara and was Assistant Branch Chief for Linguistic Services at NATO, specialising in French and English. He is currently accredited level 3 status with the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters for Turkish to English and vice versa.

His introduction to the AFP came in November 1986, when he was recruited for Operation 'Genesis' to provide expert testimony on voice recordings on 150 audio tapes – a task that took 18 months.

Members with foreign language capabilities also receive in-service analysis training to augment the depth of analytical experience in the Branch.

One of the Branch's longest serving crime analysts, Ray Ingram, started with Customs in 1966 and went on to the Federal Narcotics Bureau and then to the AFP in 1979. He says that over the years he has seen a number of scams come around time and time again and he has come to recognise personal traits of some long-time criminals.

When it comes to arrests, he maintains that it is not what you get, it is who you get. Taking out major players can have a long-lasting affect on the crime scene.

He regards Sydney as the major centre of illicit imports, with those elsewhere being organised by Sydney-based crime groups.

He finds great satisfaction in the analytical process and said that in his retirement he has seriously considered prospecting for gold; an ironic twist for someone who, like his fellow analysts, spends each working day sifting through mountains of paper for minute bits of information that will help to put criminals behind bars.

Forensic Services: a vital role

By Stephen Simpson



Sergeant Ray Salmon and Constable Leonie Marshall operating the VSC-1 CCD camera unit.

IT'S one thing to know who the villains are and to catch them in the act; it's another to have them locked up for what they deserve.

Many factors come into play. The investigation must be sound; the brief of evidence foolproof and the prosecution well argued.

With sound forensic evidence, the chances of a successful prosecution are greatly enhanced. In Eastern Region, forensic services are provided by the Physical Evidence Section and the Document Examination Branch, (DEB), both being outposts of the Forensic Services Division based in Canberra.

The staff of the Physical Evidence Section photographs drug seizures, crime scenes and any evidentiary material; it fingerprints evidence and examines vehicles and equipment; and provides photographic services. Most time is spent on drug seizures, and the section has developed unrivalled expertise in the area of drug substitutions used in controlled deliveries.

The Section regularly disassembles and removes drugs from suitcases, packing crates, machinery, electronic equipment, and anything that can be used as a means of concealment.

Substituting the drugs with a suitable substance can be difficult, but reassembling the item to a condition where its interception is undetectable to the drug trafficker is a real art. In one substitution the Section made a duplicate stamp of the brand of heroin. The stamp contained a subtle difference from the original for identification purposes.

The Document Examination Branch examines and compares questioned or disputed documents with material from a known source to establish the age, content or source of the material. Most of the work involves comparisons of handwriting, signatures, printers, paper, et cetera, and is done by members who undertake a four year in-house training course.

With the recent move to the Region's 'tailor made' building, the facilities and equipment levels for both the physical evidence and the DEB sections are now first class. The DEB is the proud possessor of one of only three video spectral comparators in Australia. This instrument, worth \$50,000, uses reflected infra-red luminescence in the examination of a suspect document to determine whether it has been altered or partly obliterated.