

# AFP helps rebuild Afghanistan



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**Media reporting about Afghanistan tends to highlight Australia's military contribution, but quietly behind-the-scenes, the AFP is weighing in to the challenge of helping to rebuild this war-ravaged nation and combat the growing narcotics trade. Commissioner Keelty recently travelled to this landlocked mountainous country in central Asia to meet with the four AFP members participating in this international effort.**

We've all seen it on the news, but for some AFP members it's been home for almost 12 months. Afghanistan—a place that has suffered more than 25 years of instability and conflict—remains a boiling pot of insurgency, transnational crime and political instability.

The AFP deployed members to this challenging environment in October 2007. Two members are based in Kabul as high-level advisers to senior Afghanistan National Police (ANP) officers and attached to the Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan

(CSTC-A), a multinational security transition force currently overseeing efforts to train and build the capability of the ANP. A further two members are based in Jalalabad working with the British Embassy Drug Team (BEDT) as mentors to the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA) which manages all major drug investigations in Afghanistan. Altogether, the deployment represents a proactive step by the AFP in combating illicit narcotics at a national and global level.

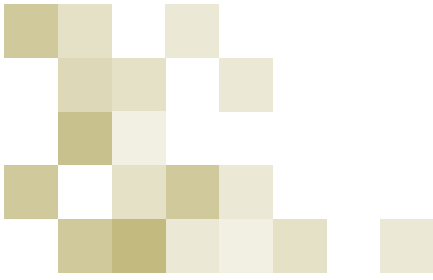


The AFP's Australian Illicit Drug Intelligence Program (AIDP) estimates Afghan heroin accounts for about 20 per cent of the heroin seized at the Australian border; the United Nations Survey on Opium in Afghanistan shows the country undertakes 92 per cent of global opium production with poppy cultivation almost tripling over the past 10 years.

## Commissioner's visit

Commissioner Keelty touched down in Kabul—the capital and largest city of Afghanistan in the southern foothills of the Hindu Kush mountain range—on 19 June 2008, just weeks out from Kabul's hottest month. He observed first-hand the work being undertaken by AFP Contingent Commander Superintendent Gary Gent and Superintendents Mick Duthie, Phil Spence and Kjell Brennemo. Although only a short visit, it allowed the Commissioner to sample some of the difficulties and unique considerations of working in a country that is still very much in the midst of armed conflict. Simply getting there showed him what AFP members experienced when deploying into Afghanistan and also how the Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and other Australian government personnel often reach their destination.

For very sound operational security reasons, transport into and out of Afghanistan is a complex process run by extremely efficient and skilled ADF personnel.



**Above:** Commissioner Keelty with the acting Head of the Australian Mission Brigadier Bowen, Deputy Commander Joint Task Force 633 and AFP members in Kabul.

**Above right:** Commissioner with AFP members at Kabul airport.

### Developing partnership with the ADF

October 2008 marks 12 months of the AFP deployment to Afghanistan and will see some changes to the way the AFP works there, including a closer interaction with the ADF in some areas.

In recognition that the AFP and ADF are increasingly being called on to work together across a wide spectrum of operations and activities, both organisations have embarked on a process to improve interoperability.

Three AFP liaison officers have been embedded in the ADF. Considerable work is being done across the AFP to identify opportunities for interoperability, otherwise known as our organisations' ability to work together.

It is this strengthened network of liaison and engagement that has enabled such visits as the Commissioner's to occur.

### Further AFP deployment

On 13 May 2008 the Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon. Bob Debus, announced the AFP would be deploying additional members to Afghanistan. In an Attorney-General's Department media release on 13 May 2008, he said:

"The large scale production of opium in Afghanistan continues to fuel the Taliban-led insurgency, threatening regional and international security and is a cause of human suffering across the world.

"The Rudd Government is committed to the international effort in Afghanistan and this increase in personnel provides a further opportunity to share the AFP's expertise."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Media release 13 May 2008: AFP numbers boosted in Afghanistan, <[http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/agd.nsf/Page/Publications\\_Budgets\\_Budget2008\\_MediaReleases\\_AFPNumbersBoostedinAfghanistan](http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/agd.nsf/Page/Publications_Budgets_Budget2008_MediaReleases_AFPNumbersBoostedinAfghanistan)>

### Presentation of awards

The AFP Afghanistan contingent members bring a wealth of experience to their current mission. During his visit, Commissioner Keelty recognised this through an informal ceremony at Camp Anjuman, attended by the acting Head of the Australian Mission and the Deputy Commander Joint Task Force 633. During the ceremony, Superintendent Gent was presented with the Police Overseas Service Medal Clasp RAMSI for service with the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, the AFP Service Medal and his 25-year clasp.

Superintendent Duthie received the AFP Operations Medal for his involvement in *Operation Serene*, the AFP response to restore law and order in Timor-Leste in 2006.

Superintendent Brennemo was awarded the United Nations Medal for service from 29 August 2006 to 1 December 2007, as well as the National Medal and AFP Service Medal.