

13

The Australian Federal Police in Afghanistan, 2007–14

Col Speedie and Steve Mullins

The humanitarian work undertaken in support of civil society and non-government organisations described earlier was complemented by the work of the Australian Federal Police (AFP), notably in Afghanistan. This chapter examines this police dimension to Australia's war in Afghanistan.

The AFP commitment to Afghanistan commenced in October 2007 with four officers deployed to Kabul and Jalalabad, growing to 28 officers per deployment by the time it finished in 2014. These officers were deployed to Kabul, Kandahar and Tarin Kowt. This effort is not widely known outside those government agencies and foreign partners involved in Afghanistan, and in general prompts the question of why they were there and what were they doing in a high-risk, warlike environment. The answer is that Australian civilian police have been engaged in expeditionary policing¹ since 1964 with the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), which saw the deployment of 40 police officers from several Australian police services. The term 'expeditionary policing' is used to define the role of civilian police who are increasingly deployed abroad to support peace operations.

1 'Expeditionary policing', a term defined by the author, best describes the activities of civilian police deploying to an international foreign jurisdiction, to conduct domestic policing activities as they would in their home jurisdiction. This usually includes the application of executive police powers of that foreign jurisdiction, as generally happens on Chapter 7-mandated UN peacekeeping operations. 'International policing' differs in the application of effort.

Since that first deployment to UNFICYP, the AFP has deployed officers in an expeditionary role to Cambodia, Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan, Haiti, Timor Leste, Bougainville, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Afghanistan. The Solomon Islands deployment, also known as the Regional Assistance Mission Solomon Islands (RAMSI), is distinctive for two reasons. First, it was as an Australian-led regional mission rather than United Nations one, and second, that, within the umbrella of overall civilian leadership, it was police-led with a robust military component in support, rather than the reverse, which was historically the case in UN peacekeeping missions.

Each peacekeeping or police capacity development mission is different, and Australia's international policing experience has shown that the dangers posed to police are very real and quite varied. The deployment of AFP members to Afghanistan certainly presented unique challenges that had not been present in other missions. The majority of the Afghan battle space was dominated by an insurgency that was actively involved at the epicentre of the global opium trade. The capital, Kabul, was under regular complex attacks,² which included the use of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs). So, with this in mind, the AFP Commissioner at the time declined requests that AFP members be employed in 'outside the wire' mentoring duties in Uruzgan Province until such time as the environment permitted civilian police to do so.

The first deployment

The first contingent of four AFP officers deployed to Afghanistan in October 2007. Two members were embedded³ within the Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan (CSTC-A) at Camp Eggers as mentors; one as Senior Mentor to the Afghan National Police (ANP) Chief of Criminal Investigations Department and the second as a police adviser to the CSTC-A Deputy Commanding General for Police Development. The remaining two members were deployed to Jalalabad to focus on counter-narcotics intelligence. This city, to the east of Kabul, straddled the significantly strategic road to Peshawar. The police also

2 'Complex attack' is a military term for a multiple, simultaneous and multi-locational attack, although, in the case of Afghanistan, this usually involved use of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs), placed IEDs and/or suicide bomb attack by armed fighters who attack the target post blast and as a final act detonate a suicide vest they are wearing.

3 An embed in this context was the deployment of a military, police or civilian officer into a foreign military unit; in this case, an Australian police officer into a US Army unit.

mentored the Afghan Counter Narcotics Police (CNPA) in that location. This is the only time when AFP members were working and mentoring ANP ‘outside the wire’.

This first deployment was under the auspices of a government-to-government agreement separate from the same status of forces agreement covering the ADF or NATO. Hence, each year, a new agreement for the deployment of Australian police to Afghanistan had to be negotiated and signed before a new contingent could be deployed. This agreement approved the carriage of firearms, movement into and out of the country, specific armed and armoured private security, and life support services for the AFP in Kabul and Jalalabad.

Midway through this first deployment, the two AFP members deployed to Jalalabad had to depart that city owing to specific significant threats against them. Their increasing success in the mentoring of the CNPA there, culminating in the public destruction of a few thousand kilograms of illicit narcotics, upset some significant players in the illicit narcotics industry. Those in Kabul were equally successful, with the AFP Commander Afghanistan Mission responsible for writing the highly significant ANP Criminal Investigations Department development and training program, which was eventually adopted by the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan as the foundation development and training program for criminal investigations in Afghanistan. The second member was appointed as a senior police adviser, working within the staff of the Commanding General of CSTC-A.

Operation CONTEGO

In 2008, the Australian Government National Security Committee of Cabinet (NSC)⁴ approved a new AFP Concept of Operations for the mission. The strategic guidance of the mission was defined thus:

The Government of Australia intends to enhance support for international stabilization operations in Afghanistan through the deployment of policing expertise to Australian whole of government activities in southern Afghanistan and other international efforts based in Kabul. The AFP contingent will focus on counter-narcotics and criminal intelligence.

⁴ The NSC is chaired by the Prime Minister and is the focal point for decision-making on national security.

On 15 October 2008, the Prime Minister of Australia further outlined government policy as it related to the strategic engagement with Afghanistan as follows:

To get a long-term solution to Afghanistan's internal tension (both in Uruzgan Province and nationwide), there will need to be a carefully integrated civilian, political and military strategy. Our Afghanistan policy is a comprehensive one. We have a strong military commitment—one that includes training and mentoring as key roles. We have a broad development assistance program—one that helps to build skills and soft and hard infrastructure. We will subject our commitment to annual review against the mission we have set for ourselves, against the integrated civilian and military strategy agreed with NATO and against the application of those strategic objectives to our particular charge in Uruzgan Province.⁵

Also supporting the intent of this concept of operations General Stanley McChrystal, the new Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (COMISAF), stated in 2009:

The insurgency is fuelled by a number of enabling factors, including a thriving narcotics industry, illicit finance, corruption at all levels of government, and a variety of other criminal enterprises. The narcotic industry dominates Afghanistan's economy and has a chokehold on the country's other major industry, agriculture. Narcotics are a significant source of funding for the insurgency of an estimated 3 to 4 billion dollars a year in drug revenue. These factors form a nexus that undercuts population security, legitimate governance, rule of law, licit agriculture, and sustainable development.⁶

However, as the war against the insurgency in Afghanistan was still within the armed conflict phase of operations, the mission could not be defined as a traditional peacekeeping mission as the parties had not yet ceased military operations. Nor could the mission be defined as a traditional or contemporary police capacity-building mission at that stage for the same reason.

5 K. Rudd, Prime Minister of Australia, 'Australian Policy in Afghanistan: Address to the C.E.W Bean Foundation Dinner', speech, 15 October 2008, Australian War Memorial, www.pm.gov.au/node/5517 (retrieved 1 May 2010).

6 S. McChrystal (COMISAF 2009), *United States Government Integrated Civilian and Military Campaign for Support to Afghanistan*, Commonwealth Institute, www.comw.org/qdr/fulltext/0908eikenberryandmccrystal.pdf (retrieved 5 May 2010).

During October and November 2008, the new mission, called Operation CONTEGO, deployed personnel to intelligence and strategic advisory roles, to shape counter-narcotics and law enforcement activities that would contribute to whole-of-government and international efforts to debilitate illicit narcotics activities in Afghanistan. The deployment for Operation CONTEGO involved the new AFP Commander of the Afghanistan Mission deployed to Kabul as an embed in the Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan. The appointment was for him to continue as Senior Mentor to the Chief of the ANP Criminal Investigations Department while also responsible to further leverage stakeholder and partner agency influence from a whole-of-country perspective in respect of the narcotics industry. These stakeholders and partners included the country managers of the US Drug Enforcement Agency, the UK Serious and Organized Crime Office (now called the UK Crime Commission), senior ISAF members, the Australian defence attaché in Kabul, the Australian ambassador to Afghanistan and the head of the European Union Police Mission.

Three AFP members deployed to Kandahar airfield to leverage military intelligence resources located at ISAF Regional Command South Headquarters. Three members deployed to Tarin Kowt to support ADF assets who shared joint responsibility with Dutch forces for ISAF security within Uruzgan. A criminal intelligence officer deployed to the joint US–UK Interagency Operations Coordination Centre (IOCC)⁷ in Kabul to support the ISAF criminal intelligence collection effort undertaken to combat the Afghan narcotics trade.

All life support and protection for the AFP mission members deployed to Kandahar and Tarin Kowt were provided by the ADF. Members in Kabul were provided with life support and personal security via a commercial contract arrangement with Armour Group, who were eventually taken over by the security firm G4S.

⁷ The AFP had a strategic partnership with the IOCC and its parent organisation, the Joint Narcotics Analysis Centre (JNAC). The IOCC, the tactical arm of the JNAC, provided criminal intelligence and law enforcement fusion in Afghanistan. The IOCC fuses the strategic intelligence capabilities of the US and UK military and law enforcement agencies—the DEA and SOCA respectively—which had the lead role in narcotics interdiction within Afghanistan.



Afghan artillery soldiers fire their D-30 Howitzer as the Australian mentors watch on at the heavy weapons range in Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan, 2010.

Source: Courtesy of the Department of Defence.

Apart from the continuing international engagement stakeholder tasks in Kabul, three important projects emerged early in the deployment that would set the scene for significant strategic impacts on the rule-of-law environment.

First, Col Speedie, who was AFP Commander of the Afghanistan Mission, was deeply involved in the initial establishment of the Senior Police Advisers Group in Kabul. Attending a meeting at the United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA) in October, the AFP Commander of the Afghanistan Mission noted that the lack of coordinated effort in the law and justice space directly affected the development of the ANP. Despite the many projects underway by various NGOs, no one was coordinating the projects to ensure that there was no duplication of effort or any negative impact from competing groups. Discussing the problem with the International Police Liaison Officer assigned to the CSTC-A (a full colonel from the US Army Military Police), the AFP Commander suggested a coordination group of the heads of the many police missions in Afghanistan to deconflict and synergise police development projects. This body would also act as a strategic police development think tank

for the International Police Coordination Board. The board was chaired by the Minister of the Interior and attended by the ambassadors of countries contributing financially to police development, as well as the Commanding General of the CSTC-A and the head of the European Police Mission in Afghanistan.

The main purpose of the Senior Police Advisers Group was to have the most senior foreign police officers in Afghanistan feed organisational development advice to the Minister of the Interior and to the International Police Coordination Board, in a coordinated manner, and coordinate police development projects across all the regions. Importantly, it also had as a member a senior police officer from the Office of the Minister of the Interior. In order to bring the Senior Police Adviser (SPA) of UNAMA into the project, it was decided to offer the chair of the Senior Police Advisers Group to the SPA for the first three months, and after that it would rotate between the members. Meetings were hosted at the European Police Mission camp in Kabul.

The second project the AFP Commander led in Kabul was the establishment of the Afghan Major Crimes Task Force. This was a joint task force of the ANP and the National Directorate of Security designed to combat kidnapping, organised crime and corruption. Crimes of these types were strongly linked across the country and had a nexus with the illicit narcotics industry. The project commenced with the development of the Kidnapping Investigation Unit. Kidnapping of Afghan nationals was on the increase in Kabul, along with the alarmingly high rate of kidnapping of foreign journalists and aid workers. Owing to concerns that certain members of the ANP might have been behind some of the kidnappings,⁸ a US Army colonel tasked as mentor to the Afghan Counter Terrorism Police ensured that a highly vetted police unit was established within the ANP that could be trusted to combat kidnapping. His plan was to have the unit mentored by anti-kidnapping experts from the FBI and to have all members polygraphed to ensure that they were not involved in crime, nor linked to it through family members.

8 Intelligence was being received at that time that a small cadre of senior and highly placed Afghan police officers were engaging their own officers to carry out the kidnappings of the foreign nationals and then both negotiating and delivering the ransom money in cash for their release.

Unfortunately, the colonel was in the final stages of his deployment and asked that the AFP Commander take over the project as the new Senior Mentor of the Kidnapping Investigation Unit. AFP management back in Australia granted permission and, as part of the process, the AFP Commander was also able to hand over his duties as Senior Mentor to the Chief of the Criminal Investigations Department to the Chief of the European Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL). EUPOL was eager to take on this role and could provide up to seven more members as the new development team to the Chief of the Criminal Investigations Department. This handover was considered a win for both the European Police Mission and CSTC-A. Just before the departure of the colonel, the first of the FBI Kidnapping Investigation Unit mentors arrived in country to commence work on first recruiting and vetting the new members, then training them, all while commencing actual operations as the kidnappings continued to occur. This unit had a direct line of communication to the Minister of the Interior, HE Mr Hanif Atmar, who was exceptionally supportive. As Senior Mentor for the Kidnapping Investigation Unit, the AFP Commander was responsible for its development at the political and organisational levels.

In harvesting more intelligence on kidnappings from various foreign sources in Kabul, the AFP Commander of the Afghanistan Mission confirmed the suspected nexus between kidnapping, organised crime groups and corruption within the police, justice sector and Afghan government. Combined with the problem of the lack of coordinated effort within these sectors, the AFP Commander of the Afghanistan Mission moved to overcome these issues by expanding the Kidnapping Investigation Unit into a major national law enforcement task force to combat kidnapping, corruption and organised crime. With its own intelligence and prosecutions teams, it would be able to develop in secret criminal target packs with information provided by foreign and local intelligence sources, then investigate, arrest and finally prosecute those arrested in court, in front of a vetted judge.

The Afghan Major Crimes Task Force would be an Afghan-led, joint ANP and National Directorate of Security unit being (initially) mentored and trained by a multinational law enforcement mentoring team from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. As the scope of the project involved a great deal of financing and the deployment of more FBI agents, the full support of the US Government was required. The AFP Commander of the Afghanistan Mission negotiated the project

through both the CSTC-A and US Embassy law enforcement contacts in order to gain that commitment before briefing the Minister of the Interior. During the following months, the Kidnapping Investigations Unit was very successful, with some 40 national and foreign kidnap victims safely recovered and more than 140 persons involved in the kidnappings arrested. By July 2009, the Afghan Major Crimes Task Force project was fully operational with US\$30 million in funding from CSTC-A and the further deployment of FBI members who assumed control of the project on their arrival. The AFP Commander of the Afghanistan Mission remained the Senior Mentor to the Afghan Major Crimes Task Force (AMCTF), representing the interests of the Commanding General of CSTC-A.

The third project of the AFP Commander of the Afghanistan Mission was to have three AFP members embedded within the Kandahar Intelligence Fusion Cell situated at Kandahar airfield to gather and process counter-narcotic intelligence that could then be used as evidence. Before deployment, the ADF asserted that it would take the lead for securing the engagement of the 'Four Eyes' (i.e. the Five Eyes, less New Zealand, which was not involved) military intelligence community within Regional Command – South (RC-South). From October 2008 until late February 2009, the ADF was unable to secure that support and subsequently advised that the AFP would have to engage each individual country's intelligence community on a bilateral basis to gain access to the facility and the material within. This surprising roadblock was eventually overcome in no small way thanks to an AFP officer embedded within the ISAF headquarters of the IOCC in Kabul. The general work of this officer involved developing law enforcement and prosecutorial target packages for those involved in the illicit narcotics industry, with the great spin-off that the AFP would be exposed to the best daily intelligence on the Afghan illicit narcotics industry. Another advantage was that this presence strengthened the relationship between the AFP Commander of the Afghanistan Mission and the head of the IOCC. As good fortune would have it, this head of the IOCC reported directly to Commander of ISAF, who was then General David D. McKiernan, and had an excellent working relationship with him. It was this relationship that was positively exploited in February 2009 by the AFP Commander of the Afghanistan Mission in order to place three AFP members in the Kandahar Intelligence Fusion Cell.

In March 2009, the new US administration changed its counter-narcotics strategy from one of large-scale poppy eradication to a more targeted policy that combined a more cohesive military–civilian plan to attack the nexus of the insurgency, narcotics and government corruption. To implement this new policy, the US administration, through ISAF Command, directed that a new joint military–civilian task force be established at RC-South, known as the Combined Joint Interagency Task Force – Nexus (CJIATF-Nexus). It was tasked to develop a counter-narcotics intelligence collection, counter-narcotics campaign planning, assessment, targeting and fusion capability, and support the London-based Joint Narcotics Analysis Centre to conduct strategic-level analysis, studies on effects of the narcotics trade on security and governance, and provide reach-back support to the IOCC situated at ISAF headquarters in Kabul.

Fortuitously, the AFP team had just been accepted into the Kandahar Intelligence Fusion Cell and was now in the best position to be part of this new unit. Very quickly after the announcement of the creation of the CJIATF-Nexus, as the IOCC representatives in RC-S, the AFP was quickly invited to join it as a senior partner, and was tasked with a leading role in its development.

The AFP mission was now placed at the centre of the implementation of the new ISAF Civilian–Military Plan as it related to counter-narcotics within the country. In the weeks that followed, the CJIATF-Nexus undertook a comprehensive harvest of all known military and criminal intelligence from within the Afghan battle space. This intelligence environment scan identified most, if not all, of the criminal syndicates that were operating in and out of Afghanistan. Unfortunately, none of this intelligence reporting could be disseminated to Afghan law enforcement as all of the military intelligence was highly classified. Also, Afghan law enforcement, in particular the ANP and the Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan, had serious allegations of corruption to confront, as it appeared that a number of the criminal syndicates identified in the intelligence scan had strong links to serving senior executive officers of the Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan.

This new cell was able eventually to deliver criminal intelligence solutions to the ISAF battle space managers in direct support to non-lethal military counter-narcotic operations. What this means is that the AFP, through its involvement with the CJIATF-Nexus, was now able to

provide a non-kinetic means of removing significant players from the battlefield, through a rule of law path that, when done, had a positive impact on the general population and on the government of Afghanistan.

Proof of the success of this joint police–military initiative came in July 2009. The Aghan Major Crimes Task Force enabled with sanitised CJIATF-Nexus criminal intelligence and supported by US Drug Enforcement Agency and mentors from the UK Serious and Organized Crime Office arrested the Argestan Provincial Border Police Chief, Colonel Shar Shahin, with 4,300 kilograms of hashish and 90 kilograms of pure Afghan brown heroin. While Shahin was subsequently sentenced to 20 years imprisonment, this operation caused significant anxiety with certain members of the government of Afghanistan and police as it was the first time some felt truly exposed to the coming tide of high-profile arrests and criminal prosecutions that would be the inevitable result of such a successful multinational–Afghan military–police partnership.

In May 2009, when the sterile corridor concept (for evidentiary integrity) was being cemented within the operations, the CJIATF-Nexus team, as well as its executive team (including AFP), briefed the US Defence Secretary of Defence, Robert Gates. They outlined the capabilities being realised through the fusion of military intelligence and international law enforcement criminal intelligence inside the CJIATF—Nexus. These were in direct support of both ISAF battle-space owners and the potential positive outcomes utilising Afghan rule of law outcomes. Gates checked out the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities—which he pushed to increase in both Afghanistan and Iraq, at a classified intelligence fusion centre. He emphasised the importance of this effort to operations underway in Afghanistan, with the ‘fusion of intelligence and operations in a way that has never been done before in warfare’.⁹

Operation SYNERGY

Moving on through this very busy period, in August 2009, the AFP deployed a further contingent of police to Tarin Kowt under the banner of Operation SYNERGY. These members were to work in partnership with

⁹ D. Miles, ‘Gates wraps up Afghanistan visit with new insights’, 8 May 2009, United States Department of Defense, waronterrornews.typepad.com/home/2009/05/gates-optimistic-on-afghanistan.html (retrieved 3 May 2010).

the Dutch police from the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan; however, not long after their arrival, the Dutch police withdrew, allowing the AFP essentially to take over full management of the police training facility. Their main focus was to train all ANP recruits who were deployed to Uruzgan. They were also able to develop new training programs for leadership and specialist operations, which was a hugely successful project that eventually provided training for more than 2,500 police officers in basic police patrol officer courses and other police specialist and leadership programs.

Operation ILLUMINATE

In 2010, Operation CONTEGO and Operation SYNERGY were combined into Operation ILLUMINATE. From this point on until its withdrawal in 2014, the AFP continued to be engaged mostly in the training of ANP, but in a broader sense that also included training members of the Afghan Major Crimes Task Force, and conducting other police specialist training programs in Kabul. Further development of the AFP contribution to Afghanistan from that point witnessed senior members of the AFP deployed to significant positions within ISAF headquarters as advisers.

Conclusion

This historical study has highlighted one of the more distinctive roles of the AFP in undertaking capacity-building efforts in support of both indigenous law enforcement and international stabilisation efforts in Afghanistan.

The mission provided tangible solutions to ISAF senior officials who continue to enable and support international stabilisation operations in Afghanistan. The mission, via its direct involvement in establishing both the AMCTF and the CJIATF-Nexus, further delivered law enforcement solutions that enabled the movement of sanitised classified military intelligence to the Afghan law enforcement criminal intelligence domain. This then allowed vetted and credible Afghan law enforcement teams (specifically the AMCTF) to target, disrupt and dismantle those criminals operating in the nexus between insurgency, narcotics and corrupt

operations within the Afghan Government. Through its involvement in the initial establishment of the Senior Police Advisors Group in Kabul, the AFP supported the strategic development of the ANP in both policy and training.

In the initial stages of the AFP contribution, three key developments were successfully undertaken by the AFP that aligned to support the international stabilisation efforts in Afghanistan. These were, first, to develop an operational national law enforcement unit of integrity to combat kidnapping, corruption and organised crime (the Afghan Major Crimes Task Force); second, to develop a robust, internationally supported national criminal intelligence unit (CJIATF-Nexus) to support the Major Crimes Task Force; and last, to assist in developing a Strategic Police Advisory Group to shape and influence ANP policy and training development. Following on from this, the AFP then expanded its mission fully and successfully to conduct and manage the training of Afghan police who were involved in many varied policing disciplines.

The Concept of Operations was developed to support the deployment of the mission in a way that was broad enough to allow for the realignment of the mission towards capacity building of the government of Afghanistan and Afghan law enforcement, should the opportunity arise. This flexibility was crucial to the mission outcomes and ensured that opportunities could be harnessed in support of wider strategic objectives, such as in 2009 and later in regard to the training effort from 2009 to 2014.

The AFP withdrew its mission in 2014 after maintaining a presence in Afghanistan for seven years, successfully deploying some 103 members in various roles in four locations. Over those seven years, the significant outcomes included:

- The writing of the complete training and development package for the ANP Criminal Investigations Department.
- The initial establishment of the Afghan Major Crimes Task Force, which saw great success initially in the rescue of 40 kidnap victims in Kabul, and the arrest of some 140 persons involved in those kidnappings.
- The initial establishment of the Senior Police Advisers Group in Kabul, a strategic police development think tank hosted by the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan and led initially by the UNAMA Senior

Police Adviser, which included representation from the ANP. Its purpose was to feed organisational development advice to the Minister of the Interior and the International Police Coordination Board.

- The establishment of the CJIATF-Nexus in Kandahar, which designed and implemented the first sterile corridor intelligence pathways that allowed information gathered by the military to be used for police intelligence on the narcotics industry and high-level corruption by public officials. This type of information was later fed to the Afghan Major Crimes Task Force and resulted in the first, very public arrest of a senior Afghan Police Colonel, Shar Shahin, for the possession and transport of more than 1,000 kilograms of illegal narcotics.

Within five years from late 2009 until 2014, the AFP trained:

- 2,194 ANP patrolmen
- 259 non-commissioned officers
- 98 evidence collection officers
- 570 investigators for the Afghan Major Crimes Task Force
- 65 surveillance officers
- 13 police trainers
- 96 police officers on leadership and development programs.

The AFP also held significant police advisory positions on the International Police Coordination Board, in the Office of the Commander ISAF, and as Senior Mentor to the Deputy Minister for Security. Members were also deployed to the European Union Police Mission.

The seven-year AFP Afghanistan Mission was a highly risky and expensive endeavour that saw 103 AFP members deployed to harsh and dangerous conditions. Numerous rocket and mortar attacks at Tarin Kowt and Kandahar airfield took the lives of soldiers and civilians alike. In Kabul, numerous complex and VBIED attacks were carried out against ISAF camps and convoys. Camp Eggers, which was the headquarters of CSTC-A, where the AFP Commander of the Afghanistan Mission worked, and the front gates of ISAF headquarters, where the AFP IOCC member worked, were both subject to a VBIED attack that resulted in the deaths and injuries of ISAF personnel. In addition, a convoy of civilian staff from the IOCC was attacked by a VBIED at the military entrance of Kabul International Airport, resulting in a loss of life and severe wounding of civilians in armoured vehicles, the same type as used by the AFP.

There was the constant threat and fear of green-on-blue attacks whereby rogue ANP officers or soldiers would target their ISAF mentors and trainers, at times preventing AFP members from attending ANP buildings or the headquarters in Kabul. The Ministry of Justice was the subject of a complex attack while a member of the UK prosecutions mentoring team was there, luckily escaping thanks to the excellent quick extraction reactions of his Close Personal Protection Team supplied by Armour Group, the very same company that provided protection for the AFP in Kabul. The back road to the military airport that was used as an alternative route for AFP members in Kabul came under sustained sniper attack, preventing its further use and thereby forcing the AFP to use Jalalabad Road, nicknamed 'Bomb Alley', as the only route they could take to get to and from work each day. All of this and more happened just in 2008–09, with no reduction in the threat at any time throughout the entire seven years the AFP was deployed to Afghanistan.

With this as the working environment for AFP members, special recognition is given to all of them for achieving so much in such a short period, in such conditions that civilian police are neither conditioned, trained nor fully mentally prepared to work in. It takes personal resilience and boldness to achieve anything in this environment, and all participating AFP members should be rightfully recognised for their excellent and dedicated contribution. Not all returned to Australia without scars. Not all returned the same as when they left. While this narrative contributes in some small way to tell the story of the AFP's highly successful contribution to Afghanistan, it certainly fails to tell the human story, which only those who served there can tell in their own words and perhaps in their own time. I hope, however, that in some small way, this chapter can at least describe in general terms just how successful the seven-year AFP contribution to Afghanistan was, and that there were 103 AFP officers who, with immense dedication and at great personal risk and, in some cases, personal cost, fully contributed in striving to succeed.

This text is taken from *Niche Wars: Australia in Afghanistan and Iraq, 2001–2014*, edited by John Blaxland, Marcus Fielding and Thea Gellerfy, published 2020 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

doi.org/10.22459/NW.2020.13