



Federal Agent Andrew Warton, centre, says walking through the old cities in Pakistan is like stepping back in time.

After serving in several Australian AFP offices and overseas missions, **Federal Agent Andrew Warton** says living in Pakistan is an extremely fascinating and challenging experience, and one he didn't contemplate when he joined the AFP in 1995. Now he calls this southern-Asian country home.

Tigers and tear gas: Postcard from Pakistan



Words: Federal Agent Andrew Warton

With a history of Pathan warriors, complex cultural traditions and a continuing war on terror, life as a police liaison officer in Pakistan is never short of diversity.

The role is as varied as the landscape and cultural blend that makes up Pakistan. In between dealing with international, diplomatic, legal and policing issues, I have also been required to avoid free roaming tigers, tear gas and a range of 'interesting' driving techniques. Working in Pakistan presents a continual challenge in a constantly changing environment, making life at the AFP Islamabad office an interesting one. Recent outbreaks of protest in response to cartoon publications which were offensive to many followers of Islam were widespread across Pakistan. In Islamabad, a large mob broke through the Diplomatic Enclave and converged on the Diplomatic Missions. Protesters were later dispersed by police using tear gas and water cannons — the tear gas could be smelt from our office. Just another day on duty in South and Central Asia.

It is especially important in Pakistan to cultivate and continually foster the relationship between Pakistan and Australia, with an obvious focus on mutual law enforcement issues and intelligence sharing. Every decision is not necessarily solely related to law enforcement, and as a diplomat attached to the Australian High Commission, the impact of any action or inaction on bilateral relationships is just one of many elements to consider during day-to-day business.

Pakistan's complicated history serves as a reminder that when an incident occurs it is far too late to begin the process of building relationships. Clear communication and knowledge of the cultural nuances are a key component of business at post. Pakistanis are renowned for their hospitality, which is even evident at formal and business meetings — business cannot be discussed until endless chicken sandwiches, pastries and numerous cups of green tea are consumed. It is usual for the first half of most business meetings to focus on discussions about cricket — a favourite sport in



"The smell of spices mingles with chapattis being cooked roadside, giving a sense of pure cultural immersion".

both Australia and Pakistan, the latter notably inspirational in their dedication to this great sport.

The AFP's Islamabad office was established in May 1984 and is currently staffed by a senior liaison officer and two locally engaged staff, with a further AFP position to be established later this year. Our first-tier country is Pakistan where the current primary focus is counter-terrorism and migration issues.

The priority two countries are Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. Afghanistan produces more than 90 per cent of the world's opium and, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, illicit drug trafficking in



On 8 October 2005, Pakistan suffered an earthquake which killed more than 70,000 people. Reconstruction is yet to commence in many of the most devastated areas.

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Afghanistan is worth approximately \$2.3 billion a year. Afghanistan is part of the silk route, which traditionally linked the east and the west, and is still used to transport opium.

The rugged and harsh landscape comprising the Pakistani/Afghan border makes it extremely difficult for local authorities to police. This is further complicated by the fact much of northern Pakistan is not directly controlled by the central government and is accordingly known as the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA).

In Sri Lanka, we concentrate on transnational criminal activity relevant to Australia, including people smuggling and counter-terrorism. Recent work in Sri Lanka has focused on counter-terrorism, people smuggling, economic crime (including money laundering) and child sex tourism matters. The AFP is delivering a comprehensive disaster victim identification training course, which has become increasingly pertinent following the Indian Ocean tsunami. Responsibility for Sri Lanka will soon transfer to a newly-established AFP post in India.

The Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan comprise the level three countries. Our area of operation is bordered by Iran, China and Russia. Working in these countries provides a unique opportunity to witness new law enforcement practices



and share knowledge and information with our international policing partners.

Environment

Pakistan is famous for its mountains and is a trekker's paradise, with five mountains all more than 8000 metres above sea level, including K2 and Nanga Parbat. For the intrepid traveller the adventures are limitless. A great experience in Pakistan is to watch the polo at the Shandur Pass. Situated 11,000 feet above sea level it is the highest polo field in the world. The mighty Indus River flows through the country and is home to blind dolphins. Historical buildings are abundant in Pakistan — with Kim's gun (from Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim*) taking pride of place on the main street of Lahore, heart of the Punjab. Walking through the old city of either Lahore or Peshawar is like stepping back in time. The smell of spices mingles with chapattis being cooked on the side of the road and gives a sense of pure

cultural immersion. The old cities are a myriad of alleys filled with tea and carpet shops. On every street corner there is someone waiting to sell you something from a simple shoeshine to carpets, ornaments, naan breads and other traditional Pakistani food. It is a truly amazing and educating experience.

Pakistan's summers are not for the faint hearted, with temperatures reaching 50 degrees for days on end. During this time activities are limited, and the pace of life slows. Shops do not open until the sun sets, and foreigners seek refuge in air-conditioned comfort. Winters are as cold as the summers are hot with it usual for temperatures to drop below zero. The monsoon season in August is spectacular and recent black lightning shows rivalled those experienced during my Darwin posting in tropical Australia.

Indeed, weather in Pakistan has become particularly topical after the South Asian earthquake in October

last year. Claiming about 80,000 lives, the epicentre was less than 100km from Islamabad. That Saturday morning in October, I fled the house certain it was to collapse. Weeks of aftershocks, some the strength of further quakes, continued to scare the city. From a 30-year-old Russian helicopter I flew across the epicentre to witness flattened villages, diverted rivers, and mountains moved by the force of this massive natural disaster.

Law enforcement

Law enforcement in Pakistan is generally arranged by province and each province (Punjab, Sindh, North West Frontier and Baluchistan) is responsible for raising, organising and equipping its own police. The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) is responsible for investigating and prosecuting all cases relating to the preparation, production, manufacture, transportation and illicit trafficking of narcotics and all the precursor materials. This extends to tracing and freezing assets and assisting other law enforcement and intelligence agencies. The ANF is the sole national drug enforcement agency in Pakistan and a key AFP partner.

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) addresses crimes with inter-provincial ramifications such as white collar crime, people smuggling, human trafficking, immigration fraud, bank fraud, currency matters and dangerous drugs. Counter-terrorism and human trafficking are major priorities. The FIA is the only federal agency in Pakistan mandated to investigate international organised

crime including terrorism. Accordingly, the FIA and AFP share a relationship based on common ground and mutual interest.

Recent visits and events have strengthened the relationship between Pakistan and Australia at a government-to-government level. This started with visits to Australia in May and June 2005 by Foreign Minister Khursheed Kasuri, followed by President Pervez Musharraf. The latter visit was the first by a Pakistani Head of State, and resulted in the signing of a government-to-government Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on counter-terrorism.

The bilateral relationship was further enhanced during a visit to Pakistan in November 2005 by Australian Prime Minister John Howard. The South Asian earthquake and associated relief efforts as well as Prime Ministerial and Presidential visits also increased the profile of Pakistan in Australia. Pakistan is cricket mad and Australians can be confident conversation in Pakistan will lead to the topic of cricket. My rural travel has been hallmarked by the sun setting over dry desert fields with Pakistanis of all ages playing cricket on carefully planned cricket pitches.

Emerging trends

Pakistan continues to produce counter-terrorism operations relevant to Australia, with people smuggling also a major source of work. All agency partnerships are highly valued and none are taken for granted. Counter-



terrorism issues relevant to Pakistan and Australian security interests continue to emerge. A recent successful Australian prosecution for terrorist offences drew heavily on assistance from Pakistani authorities and the AFP's Islamabad Office. A further prosecution is underway in the Australian courts. Pakistan can not be ignored in its relevance to future terrorism issues affecting Australia.

Relationships

The Islamabad Office is negotiating MOUs on combating transnational





Federal Agent Andrew Warton with two-and-a-half year old Labrador Harry, who is a popular resident at the Pakistan post.

"Tigers roamed the hills of my favourite running track ... rumour had it they claimed a number of lives."

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crime and developing police cooperation with all key partners in Pakistan, an historic move that will solidify our current excellent working relationships. These agreements will form the basis of increased cooperation, and a framework for multi-agency investigations and the delivery of training and technical assistance. The process was officially recognised by Prime Minister Howard and President Musharaff when Australia and Pakistan signed a letter of intent to begin negotiations in late 2005. This serves as another indication of the strengthening bilateral relationship and positive prospects for future cooperation.

As with all liaison posts, the key to success lies in cultivating and maintaining healthy relationships with international law enforcement partners. In that respect, working in Pakistan is no different from working in any of the AFP's other overseas liaison posts. All members of the AFP's International Network face the same broad daily cultural and professional challenges — and ultimately, that's what makes such a position rewarding.

Living in Pakistan

Life in Pakistan is not all work, and although recreational activities can be limited, the country is a genuinely fascinating place to explore. It is home to many sites of archaeological, religious and historical significance

and also sports some of the most extreme and harsh terrain in the world, particularly in the northern areas bordering Afghanistan. Under a heavily armed escort, I recently travelled to the Khyber Pass on the Pakistan/Afghan border, gaining a brilliant insight into centuries of rich history and conflict. Mansions allegedly built by drug lords from the proceeds of opium production, endless kilometres of dry and harsh mountains, and the most oppressive heat experienced make for a journey back in time.

In Islamabad, Faisal Mosque is reputedly the largest in the world, situated against the backdrop of the picturesque Margalla Hills. It is dedicated to the memory of the late King Faisal of Saudi Arabia who gifted the mosque to the people of Pakistan. The porticoes can accommodate 24,000 worshippers and the courtyard can accommodate an additional 40,000. The call to prayer (five times a day) is a sound I will always associate with Pakistan. The government banned mosques from using loudspeakers, but this is overlooked during Ramadan when early morning calls to prayer ensure an early start at work.

The AFP Islamabad office has helped with events recently such as the 2006 Commonwealth Games Baton Relay and visits from the Australian Prime Minister and the Australia A cricket team. After extensive liaison

and coordination with Pakistani law enforcement authorities, the events were a great success.

Life at post can produce the odd surprise. Most recently, my favourite running track in the Margalla Ranges was off limits while leopards roamed the hills. According to the media, the leopards originated in India, but hunger forced them across the border into Pakistan. It was reported the leopards had claimed a number of lives and their appetites showed no signs of abating. Fortunately, they've since moved on and I'm back into running through the ranges.

On a recent run I encountered an ape well over 5 feet tall. It gave me one look and continued on its way. Nothing like a small adrenaline rush to keep the run interesting.

As in Australia, in Pakistan there are constant concerns about water levels. At the moment, levels are worryingly low, and it looks likely we will soon enter a period of little or no water.

Pakistan constantly produces surprises, be it natural disasters, interesting police work or life changing cricket results — it all makes for an out-of-the-ordinary life.

Professional contribution, personal growth and new travel experiences are what it's all about and it is a privilege to be part of the international law enforcement jigsaw puzzle.

