

# Media Release



Thursday March 23 2006

## Pong Su sunk

The vessel *Pong Su*, which was seized by the Australian Federal Police during a major narcotic operation in 2003, was today disposed of.

Royal Australian Air Force F-111 strike aircraft bombed the vessel and an AP-3C Orion surveillance aircraft performed a range clearance and safety role during the exercise.

The vessel was sunk approximately 140 kilometres off the NSW South Coast of Jervis Bay.

The vessel was disposed of under Section 185(b) of the Customs Act 1901. When directing that the vessel be disposed of pursuant to this section, the Australian Customs Service was satisfied the vessel had been involved in criminal activity, was unseaworthy, posed a serious risk to the environment and that its condition was such that its custody or maintenance by the Commonwealth would involve an expense that would be likely to be greater than its value.

Today's disposal of the 4000 tonne vessel sends a clear message the Australian Federal Police (AFP) is committed to protecting Australia's borders.

Operation Sorbet was an extensive AFP investigation which resulted in the seizure of 150 kilograms of heroin – Victoria's biggest known attempted heroin importation – and the successful conviction of four people.

Given that the vessel was found to be directly linked to the unsuccessful importation of the heroin, its subsequent destruction today ensures the vessel will never again be used in the transportation of drugs.

AFP Operation Sorbet Commander Frank Prendergast said today's destruction proved the AFP's firm resolve to fight international illegal activities such as drug smuggling.

"The AFP is committed to working with its partner agencies to disrupt organised importation of drugs and protect the community from the devastating effects of the illegal drug trade," Federal Agent Prendergast said.

"This operation, including preparation for destruction of the vessel, was a collaborative effort between numerous government departments and law enforcement agencies. This effort stopped the heroin – with an approximated street value of more than \$100 million - reaching Australia's streets."

- Defence vision of the sinking of *Pong Su* will be fed as soon as available to the television bureau at Parliament House, Canberra. Still photographs will be posted on the Defence website at [www.defence.gov.au/media/download/](http://www.defence.gov.au/media/download/)

**Media enquiries:**

AFP Media (Canberra): (02) 6275 7100