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Australasian Institute of Policing



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SPECIAL OPERATION

IRONSIDE



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SEPTEMBER 29, 2021



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Editorial

DR AMANDA DAVIES

Editor, Assistant Professor Policing and Security at the Rabdan Academy, Abu Dhabi



Operation Ironside has not only achieved significant intervention and disruption to criminal activities, it has also injected a boost of morale and recognition for the unrelenting commitment and dedication of police agencies and their officers in a war they are committed to win.

Welcome to the 2nd issue dedicated to one of the world's highly impacting criminal activities i.e. cyber crime and encryption and policing strategies to overcome cybercrime proliferation.

This edition extends insight into Operation Ironside, the Australian contribution to the successful infiltration and dismantling of major criminal activities. As Terry Goldsworthy's valuable explanation of Operation Ironside concludes, the war continues to combat this area of criminality. In the 2021 context, this is a war and in business parlance, it is a competition: criminals vs police and police must win in order to secure the safety and security of communities across the globe now and for future generations. At the very heart is the fight for humanity, the cyber connected world in which the modern criminal organisations work is based on violation of fundamental human rights of freedom, safety of person and property,

vividly illustrated in human trafficking, transnational drug trafficking and the far reaching and devastating associated illegal activities.

One of the pivotal factors which Operation Ironside highlighted is the role of government through legislation to support the work of police and law enforcement agencies with the 'tools' they need in order to not only compete, to be ahead of the race, and the clock is ticking for the victims not yet identified.

As the AiPOL President's comment explains, the Australian Government currently has the opportunity to continue demonstration of commitment to the national and international community through support for legislation *Surveillance Legislation Amendment [Identify and Disrupt] Bill 2020* which empowers police and law enforcement agencies to draw on additional strategies to disrupt, prevent and respond to serious crime.

Arguably there will be those who raise concerns in regards to invasion of privacy potentially legalized with this Bill. The onus is on the respective police and law enforcement agencies to quality assure the operational application of the intent of the Bill. This is a significant consideration, as the crime trends indicate, cybercrime and its many manifestations is the crime of our time and responding with soundly informed and defined intent, strategies and government support will be critical to achieve success such as demonstrated in Operation Ironside.

Operation Ironside has not only achieved significant intervention and disruption to criminal activities, it has also injected a boost of morale and recognition for the unrelenting commitment and dedication of police agencies and their officers in a war they are committed to win. It is the turn now for our (Australian) legislative process to support these efforts on behalf of humanity.



The ‘most significant’ police operation in Australian history – how it worked and what it means for organised crime

TERRY GOLDSWORTHY

Associate Professor in Criminology, Bond University

The Australian Federal Police made global news this week with the revelation its Operation Ironside helped sting organised crime gangs around the world.

This was part of a broader, three-year operation with the FBI and other law enforcement agencies. Home Affairs Minister Karen Andrews described it as the “most significant operation in policing history here in Australia”.



How did it start?

Operation Ironside started with an investigation and closing down by the FBI of a company called Phantom Secure in 2018.

The Vancouver-based company provided modified Blackberry phones that operated on an encrypted network that could not be decrypted or wire-tapped by police. These devices were used exclusively by criminal networks to conduct various criminal enterprises on a global scale.

Clients included the Mexican Sinaloa drug cartel and the Hells Angels outlaw motorcycle gang in Australia. Some 20,000 devices were believed to be in use at the time the company’s CEO, Vincent Ramos, was arrested in February 2018.

Next, the AFP and FBI worked together to fill the void left by Phantom Secure with a new encrypted device named ANØM.

Under Operation Trojan Shield, police distributed ANØM among criminals, using a confidential human source – a convicted narcotics importer. This source had been working with FBI agents since 2018 in exchange for the

You had to know a criminal to get hold of one of these customised phones. The phones couldn’t ring or email. You could only communicate with someone on the same platform.

possibility of a reduced sentence for other charges he was facing.

This source has previously distributed Phantom Secure devices and agreed to distribute the devices to his existing network of distributors and clients.

As the AFP explained:
You had to know a criminal to get hold of one of these customised phones. The phones couldn’t ring or email. You could only communicate with someone on the same platform.

Little did criminals know that law enforcement and the source had built a master key into the existing encryption system. This master key surreptitiously attached to each message, enabling police to decrypt and store messages as they

were transmitted. So, ANØM was a Trojan horse, not with Greeks inside, but law enforcement.

Australia’s role

Court records unsealed this week provide a fascinating insight into how the operation unfolded.

In October 2018, the source distributed 50 devices to targets in Australia. In this test phase, Australian police saw 100% of the ANØM users were using the app for criminal activity.

Intercepted conversations also showed targets were willing to provide the devices to senior members of organised crime groups overseas. So, a global criminal investigation was now underway.



Since October 2019, the FBI has catalogued more than 20 million messages from a total of 11,800 devices in more than 90 countries. The top five countries where ANØM devices are currently used are Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Australia, and Serbia.

With the assistance of Europol – the European Union’s law enforcement agency – the FBI identified more than 300 transnational organised crime groups using the ANØM devices for criminal enterprises.

The sophistication of the criminal operations is revealed by the fact criminal organisations compartmentalised their activities with multiple brands of hardened encrypted devices.

For example, some users assigned different types of devices to different parts of drug trafficking transactions. In some instances, ANØM was used for the logistics of the drug shipments, but Ciphre or Sky were used to coordinate the concealment of the illicit proceeds.

This compartmentalisation shows how connected the encrypted communications device industry is to organised criminal activity.

Implications for Australia

The haul from Operation Ironside is impressive.

It has led to the arrest of 224 offenders on 526 charges in every mainland Australian state. Since 2018, 3.7 tonnes of drugs, 104 weapons, A\$44,934,457 million in cash, and assets worth millions of dollars have been seized.

The AFP also responded to 20 threats to kill, potentially saving the lives of innocent bystanders, with intelligence referred to state police. For example, last week, police rescued former bikie Dillon Mancuso, who was allegedly snatched from his Sydney home by a group of armed men.

The challenge ahead

But the operation has also shown how Australia has become a destination of choice for transnational organised crime groups.

In its annual report, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission notes about 70% of Australia’s serious and organised criminal threats are based offshore or have strong offshore links.

There is also a strong market for illegal drugs. As AFP Commissioner Reece Kershaw acknowledged:

Organised crime syndicates target Australia, because sadly, the drug market is so lucrative. Australians are among the world’s biggest drug takers.

Examples of this are the Mexican drug cartels expanding into Australia’s lucrative methamphetamine market.

Law enforcement should be congratulated for the outcome of this operation – but this is far from the end of their work. While we have dealt transnational organised crime a heavy blow, the war will continue as law enforcement seek to stay one step ahead in the race against organised crime.

Disclosure statement

Terry Goldsworthy does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

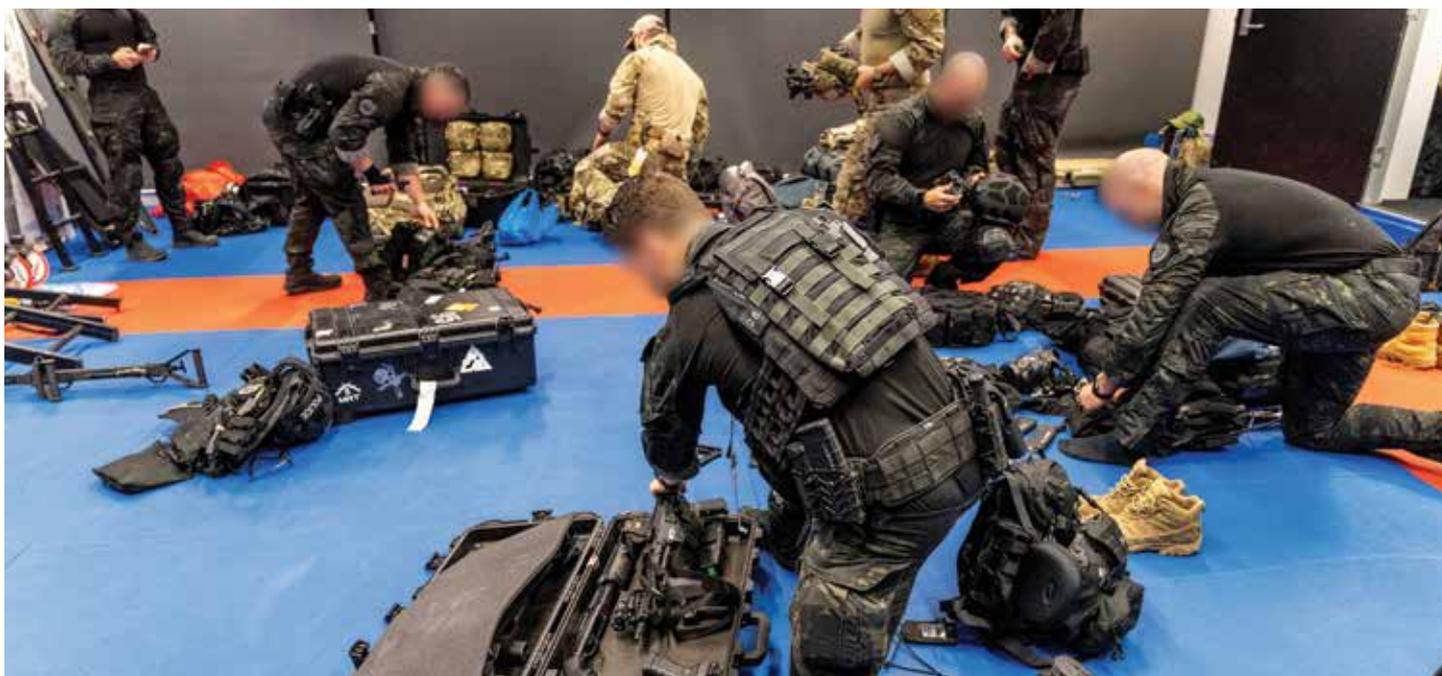


National Police Remembrance Day is on September 29 and is the day set aside to honour police who have lost their lives whilst protecting and serving their community.

In these uncertain times when the risks faced by those who serve on the frontline are greater than ever before, it's imperative we honour the fallen.

Jon Hunt-Sharman

Jon Hunt-Sharman
President, Australasian Institute of Policing

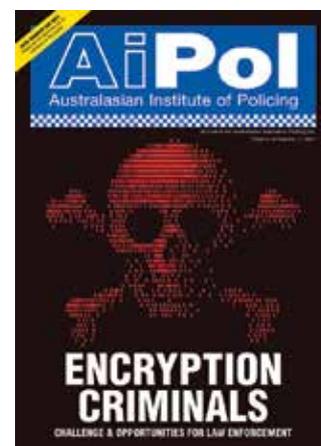


President's Comment

JON HUNT-SHARMAN

President, Committee of Management, Australasian Institute of Policing

In the Australasian Institute of Policing (Aipol) edition 1 of 2021, entitled *'ENCRYPTION CRIMINALS – Challenge & Opportunities for Law Enforcement'*, Aipol noted the opportunities and challenges of encrypted devices. That edition focused on the successes attributed to legislative amendments within Australia, France, UK, USA, Canada and New Zealand that had arguably led to the most effective exposure and dismantling of organised crime syndicates globally.



Aipol edition 1 of 2021 explored the successes of law enforcement in infiltrating encrypted devices used by organised crime as a result of supporting law enforcement legislation.

The 2018 joint law enforcement operation by the NSW Crime Commission (NSW CC), Australian Federal Police (AFP), Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC), United States Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) into a Canadian security firm, Phantom Secure, – (which offered encrypted messaging and chat services as well as encrypted devices) – , led to the

takedown of Phantom Secure globally and the imprisonment of Phantom Secure CEO Victor Ramos. The Court also ordered Ramos to forfeit \$80 million as proceeds of the crime, as well as specifically identified assets, including international bank accounts, real estate, cryptocurrency accounts, and gold coins.

The 2018 joint law enforcement operation identified that criminal organisations used Phantom Secure smartphones to facilitate the distribution of wholesale quantities of cocaine, heroin and methamphetamines throughout the world, including the United States, Australia, Mexico, Canada, Thailand and

Europe. It also included the Hells Angels in Australia, who used the phones to coordinate several killings.

In 2020 French authorities hacked into encrypted Encrochat phones and shared the data with international counterparts, secretly accessing more than 100 million messages over several months leading to international arrests throughout world, of major crime figures, significant disruption of various criminal activities, including pedophile, drug and money laundering syndicates. The operation also resulted in huge

continued on page 9

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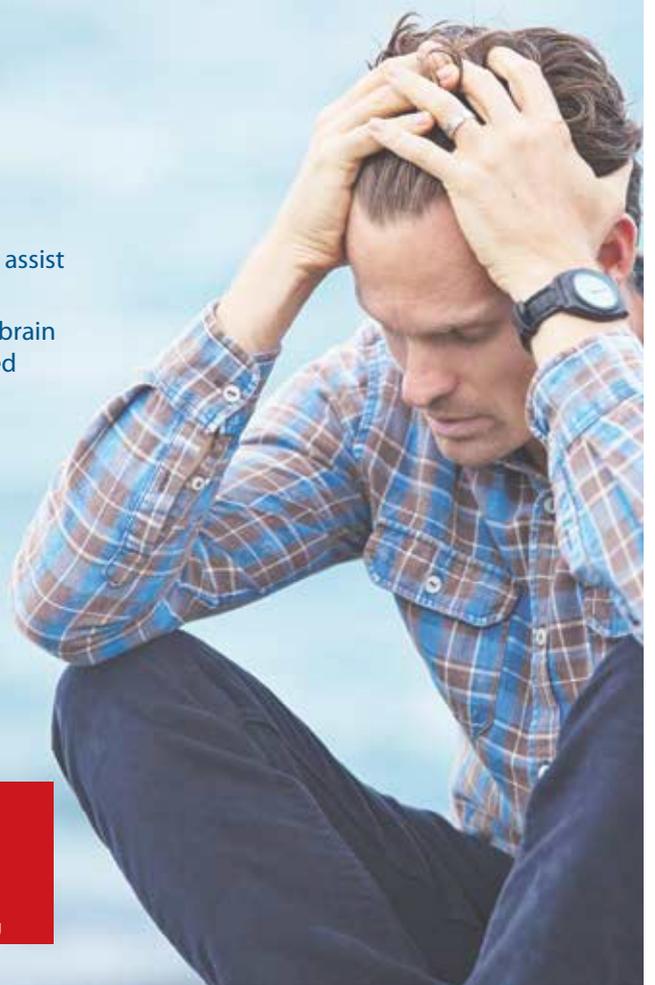
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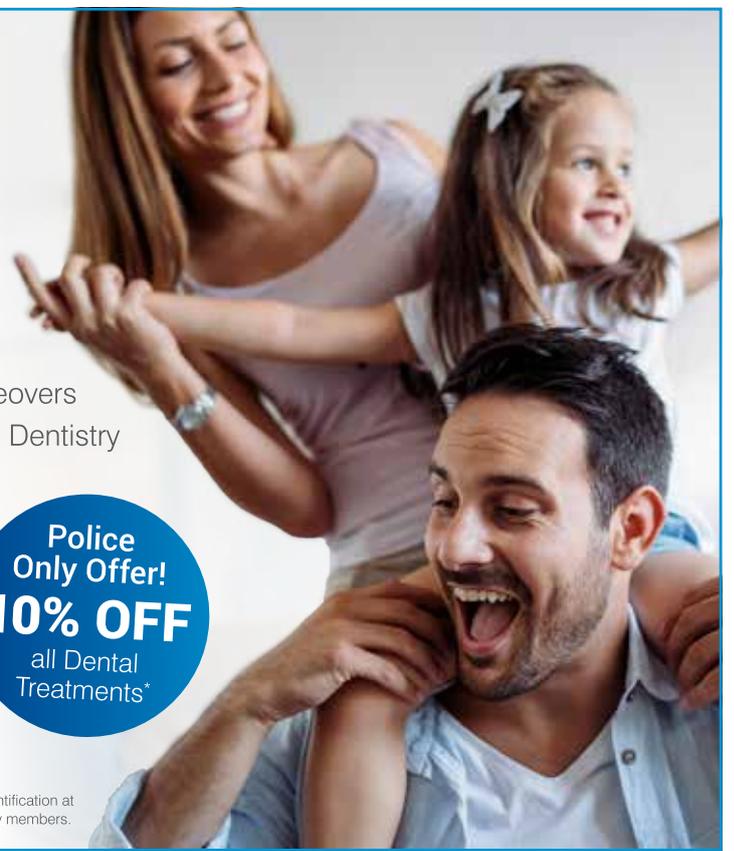
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seizures of cash, drugs and firearms, identified significant official corruption, prevented kidnapping and executions and stopped international drug shipments to Australia.

This edition focuses on another opportunity taken by law enforcement to disrupt and dismantle organised crime globally through the ongoing joint FBI and AFP Operation *Ironsides*.

Once again, FBI and AFP Operation *Ironsides* has led to Australian arrests of major crime figures, significant disruption of various criminal activities, including pedophile, drug and money laundering syndicates. The operation, although ongoing, has already resulted in huge seizures of cash, drugs and firearms, identified significant official corruption, prevented kidnapping and executions and stopped international drug shipments to Australia. It has also identified the high level of organised crime operating within Australia, particularly in regards to Outlaw Motor Cycle Gangs (OMCGs), Italian Mafia, Middle East Organised Crime, pedophile rings etc.

Whilst law enforcement should once again be congratulated for taking the opportunity to infiltrate organised crime's use of encryption devices, online criminals are constantly changing their operations and reacting to new environments. It is crucial that governments, including the Australian Parliament, amends laws in order to ensure that law enforcement agencies have effective contemporary powers of response.

In 2018 Aipol supported the *Telecommunications and Other Legislation Amendment (Assistance and Access) Act 2018* as we believed that it was important that police and law enforcement officers and the public have the protections of unambiguous legislation in relation to accessing encrypted material during criminal investigations.

Aipol again calls on the Australian Parliament to pass and enact the *Surveillance Legislation Amendment (Identify and Disrupt) Bill 2020 (the Bill)* on the same grounds.

As repeated numerous times, as a matter of general principle, Aipol is of the view that our members within policing and law enforcement are greatly assisted and protected when laws providing law enforcement agencies with intrusive powers are clear, precise and unambiguous in their terms and their interaction with other legislation.

The Bill was introduced to Parliament on 3 December 2020 and still has not been passed. On 8 December 2020 it was referred to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security. It received submissions and then conducted a public inquiry on 10 March 2021. The final report has not yet been completed by the Committee.

Conclusion

The AFP should be congratulated on Operation *Ironsides*, however successful national operations should not lead to complacency by Parliament.

Just as online criminals are constantly changing their operations and reacting to

new environments, the law must adapt in order to give law enforcement agencies effective powers of response.

Aipol believes it is important that the *Surveillance legislation Amendment (Identify and Disrupt) Bill 2020* be passed by the Australian Parliament as soon as the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security completes its report and recommendations are considered.

Whether it is to view documents, access premises, utilise listening devices and/or telephone intercepts, law enforcement and national security agencies have always possessed lawful access under appropriate legislation. Through appropriate legislation, infringement upon privacy is limited, targeted, proportional and reviewable.

As clearly demonstrated by the AFP Operation *Ironsides*, criminals are utilising electronic means – often encrypted – to conduct their criminal activities, leaving law enforcement and national security agencies unable to prevent or solve crimes without the additional powers and safeguards provided within the *Surveillance legislation Amendment (Identify and Disrupt) Bill 2020*.

The *Surveillance legislation Amendment (Identify and Disrupt) Bill 2020*, like the *Telecommunications and Other Legislation Amendment (Assistance and Access) Act 2018*, should be seen as 'enabling legislation'. It simply supports traditional law enforcement investigative powers where there is encryption crime and encryption savvy criminals.



The Identify and Disrupt Bill 2020 Overview

What is the purpose of the Bill?

The Bill amends the *Surveillance Devices Act 2004* (SD Act), the *Crimes Act 1914* (Crimes Act) and associated legislation to introduce new law enforcement powers to enhance the ability of the AFP and the ACIC to combat online serious crime.

The Bill provides clarity within its decision-making criteria and provides limitations and grounds where such powers may be exercised. This Bill provides public assurance about the use of its powers and protects police and law enforcement practitioners in the exercise of their duties.

Why does Law Enforcement need the Bill?

Cyber-enabled serious and organised crime, often enabled by the dark web and other anonymising technologies, such as bespoke encrypted devices for criminal use, present a direct challenge to community safety and the rule of law.

For example, on the dark web criminals carry out their activities with a lower risk of identification and apprehension. Many anonymising technologies and criminal methodologies can be combined for cumulative effect, meaning it is technically difficult, and time and resource intensive, for law enforcement to take effective action.

Existing electronic surveillance powers, while useful for revealing many aspects of online criminality, are not suitably adapted to identifying and disrupting targets where those targets are actively seeking to obscure their identity and the scope of their activities. Without the critical first step of being able to identify potential offenders, investigations into serious and organised criminality can fall at the first hurdle. Being able to understand the networks that criminals are involved in and how they conduct their crimes is also a crucial step toward prosecution.

What does the Bill do?

This Bill addresses gaps in the legislative framework to better enable the AFP and the ACIC to collect intelligence, conduct investigations, disrupt and prosecute the most serious of crimes, including child

abuse and exploitation, terrorism, the sale of illicit drugs, human trafficking, identity theft and fraud, assassinations, and the distribution of weapons.

The Bill contains the necessary safeguards, including oversight mechanisms and controls on the use of information, to ensure that the AFP and the ACIC use these powers in a targeted and proportionate manner to minimise the potential impact on legitimate users of online platforms.

The Bill introduces three new powers for the AFP and the ACIC. They are:

- **Data disruption warrants** to enable the AFP and the ACIC to disrupt data by modifying, adding, copying or deleting in order to frustrate the commission of serious offences online;
- **Network activity warrants** to allow agencies to collect intelligence on serious criminal activity being conducted by criminal networks, and
- **Account takeover warrants** to provide the AFP and the ACIC with the ability to take control of a person's online account for the purposes of gathering evidence to further a criminal investigation.

Data disruption warrants

These warrants will allow the AFP and the ACIC to disrupt criminal activity that is being facilitated or conducted online by using computer access techniques.

A data disruption warrant will allow the AFP and the ACIC to add, copy, delete or alter data to allow access to and disruption of relevant data in the course of an investigation for the purposes of frustrating the commission of an offence. This will be a covert power also permitting the concealment of those activities. Whilst this power will not be sought for the purposes of evidence gathering, information collected in the course of executing a data disruption warrant will be available to be used in evidence in a prosecution.

The purpose of the data disruption warrant is to offer an alternative action to the AFP and the ACIC, where the usual circumstances of investigation leading to

prosecution are not necessarily the option guaranteeing the most effective outcome. For example, removing content or altering access to content (such as child exploitation material), could prevent the continuation of criminal activity by participants, and be the safest and most expedient option where those participants are in unknown locations or acting under anonymous or false identities. Under these circumstances, it may be prudent for the AFP or the ACIC to obtain a data disruption warrant.

Applications for data disruption warrants must be made to an eligible Judge or nominated Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) member. A data disruption warrant may be sought by a law enforcement officer of the AFP or the ACIC if that officer suspects on reasonable grounds that:

- one or more relevant offences are being, are about to be, or are likely to be, committed, and
- those offences involve, or are likely to involve, data held in a computer, and
- disruption of data held in the target computer is likely to substantially assist in frustrating the commission of one or more of the relevant offences previously specified that involve, or are likely to involve, data held in the target computer.

An eligible Judge or nominated AAT member may issue a data disruption warrant if satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion founding the application for the warrant and the disruption of data authorised by the warrant is justifiable and proportionate, having regard to the offences specified in the application. The issuing authority will consider, amongst other things, the nature and gravity of the conduct targeted and the existence of any alternative means of frustrating the commission of the offences.

Information obtained under data disruption warrants will be 'protected information' under the SD Act and be subject to strict limits for use and disclosure. Consistent with existing warrants in the SD Act, compliance with the data disruption warrant regime will be overseen by the Commonwealth Ombudsman.



Network activity warrants

Network activity warrants will allow the AFP and the ACIC to collect intelligence on criminal networks operating online by permitting access to the devices and networks used to facilitate criminal activity.

These warrants will be used to target criminal networks about which very little is known, for example where the AFP or the ACIC know that there is a group of persons using a particular online service or other electronic platform to carry out criminal activity but the details of that activity are unknown. Network activity warrants will allow agencies to target the activities of criminal networks to discover the scope of criminal offending and the identities of the people involved. For example, a group of people accessing a website hosting child exploitation material and making that material available for downloading or streaming, will be able to be targeted under a network activity warrant.

Intelligence collection under a network activity warrant will allow the AFP and the ACIC to more easily identify those hiding behind anonymising technologies. This will support more targeted investigative powers being deployed, such as computer access warrants, interception warrants or search warrants.

Network activity warrants will allow the AFP and the ACIC to access data in computers used, or likely to be used, by a criminal network over the life of the warrant. This means that data does not have to be stored on the devices, but can be temporarily linked, stored, or transited through them. This will ensure data that is unknown or unknowable at the time the warrant is issued can be discovered, including data held on devices that have disconnected from the network once the criminal activity has been carried out (for example, a person who disconnected from a website after downloading child exploitation material).

The AFP and the ACIC will be authorised to add, copy, delete or alter data if necessary to access the relevant data to overcome security features like encryption. Data that is subject to some form of electronic protection may need to be copied and analysed before its relevancy or irrelevancy can be determined.

Applications for network activity warrants must be made to an eligible Judge or nominated AAT member. A network activity warrant may be sought by the chief officer of the AFP or the ACIC (or a delegated Senior Executive

Service (SES) member of the agency) if there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that:

- a group of individuals are engaging in or facilitating criminal activity constituting the commission of one or more relevant offences, and
- access to data held in computers will substantially assist in the collection of intelligence about those criminal networks of individuals in respect of a matter that is relevant to the prevention, detection or frustration of one or more kinds of relevant offences.

There are strict prohibitions on the use of information obtained under a network activity warrant. Information obtained under a network activity warrant is for intelligence only, and will not be permitted to be used in evidence in criminal proceedings, other than for a breach of the secrecy provisions of the SD Act. Network activity warrant information may, however, be the subject of derivative use, allowing it to be cited in an affidavit on application for another investigatory power, such as a computer access warrant or telecommunications interception warrant. This will assist agencies in deploying more sensitive capabilities, with confidence that they would not be admissible in court.

The Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security (IGIS) will have oversight responsibility for network activity warrants given their nature as an intelligence collection tool. This approach departs from the traditional model of oversight by the Commonwealth Ombudsman of the use of electronic surveillance powers by the AFP and the ACIC. However, the approach is consistent with the oversight arrangements for intelligence collection powers available to other agencies, including the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) and the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD).

The Bill also provides that the IGIS and the Commonwealth Ombudsman will be able to share information where it is relevant to exercising powers, or performing functions or duties, as an IGIS or Ombudsman official. This ensures that where a matter may arise during an inspection that would more appropriately be dealt with by the other oversight body, a framework is in place for the transfer of network activity warrant information, allowing efficient and comprehensive oversight to occur.

Account takeover warrants

These warrants will enable the AFP and the ACIC to take control of a person's online account for the purposes of gathering evidence about serious offences.

Currently, agencies can only take over a person's account with the person's consent. An account takeover power will facilitate covert and forced takeovers to add to their investigative powers.

An AFP or ACIC officer may apply to a magistrate for an account takeover warrant to take control of an online account, and prevent the person's continued access to that account. Before issuing the account takeover warrant, the magistrate will need to be satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for suspicion that an account takeover is necessary for the purpose of enabling evidence to be obtained of a serious Commonwealth offence or a serious State offence that has a federal aspect. In making this determination, the nature and extent of the suspected criminal activity must justify the conduct of the account takeover.

This power enables the action of taking control of the person's account and locking the person out of the account. Any other activities, such as accessing data on the account, gathering evidence, or performing undercover activities such as taking on a false identity, must be performed under a separate warrant or authorisation. Those actions are not authorised by an account takeover warrant. The account takeover warrant is designed to support existing powers, such as computer access and controlled operations, and is not designed to be used in isolation. Strict safeguards will be enforced to ensure account takeover warrants are exercised with consideration for a person's privacy and the property of third parties. There are strong protections on the use of information collected under the power.

The Bill will require the agencies to make six-monthly reports to the Commonwealth Ombudsman and the Minister for Home Affairs on the use of account takeover warrants during that period. There are also annual reports to the Minister for Home Affairs that are required to be tabled in Parliament.



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Police Policy

The Police Force has duty of care to its employees to maintain a safe place of work and to provide to the community a comprehensive policing service, which is free of alcohol and other drug abuse.

Professional and confidential counselling services within the Police Force are provided for officers experiencing substance abuse problems, and to help their families. However, if your addiction requires quick intervention, external options may need to be considered.

Random drug and alcohol testing

Random, target and mandatory testing for police officers is mandatory and is part of the drug and alcohol state policy. This is part of the duty of care to all employees, and a commitment to the Police Force. Positive results are followed with counselling, rehabilitation or disciplinary action at the discretion of the Commissioner.

Detoxing outside

Privacy is vital for members. Should a Police Officer require specialised intervention for addiction other than in-house counselling, finding suitable private rehabilitation outside the Police Force may be necessary. Choosing a drug and alcohol withdrawal centre that values professional confidentiality is important. Public community services for detox and rehab may not be suitable for Police Officers. A small and discreet independent service can offer members 100% confidentiality to protect client identity.

Confidential Detoxing

Detoxing is a very difficult task on your own, even with the support of counselling services. Gold Coast Detox and Rehab Services offers confidential and discreet private detox and rehab programs for police officers looking to preserve their identity. This is retreat-style accommodation with 24-hour medical staff plus a high level of personal care and comfort. This facility allows you to safely withdraw from substance use, but it feels like you're on a holiday.

You can also enjoy a range of therapies during your program such as daily massage, fitness training, martial arts, acupuncture, yoga, surfing and beach walking. A qualified on-site Nutritionist prepares your meals to keep you in shape, and individual food preferences are catered for.

Medical withdrawal

A resident psychiatrist can prescribe medication during your withdrawal to minimise the side-effects of detoxing. 24-hour nursing staff are also available to make sure you remain safe and comfortable through your process. Trained addiction counsellors are available everyday who understand every step you need to take, so you are not alone.

Rehab phase

Once your withdrawal phase is complete, you can continue on to your rehabilitation phase onsite, where daily professional counselling is offered to prevent relapsing when you return home.

A medical detox is usually 7-14 days, depending on the substance. The rehab phase for treatment can be anywhere between 14-90 days. For permanent results, the longer the better. It takes time to come to terms with the deeper reasons behind addiction, and to identify underlying emotional and mental triggers.

PTSD

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) lies beneath many addiction clients. This is a complex diagnosis, which may go undetected among police officers. Recognising the signs are not always possible while using alcohol and drugs. Your rehab phase may indicate that PTSD is a driver of your addiction. With staff trained in trauma, you can get a proper diagnosis with a treatment plan before you complete your program.

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SPONSORS



EXHIBITORS





Operation Ironside

AUSTRALIA



290

OFFENDERS CHARGED

728

OFFENCE COUNT #

4788kg

DRUGS SEIZED

690

SEARCH WARRANTS

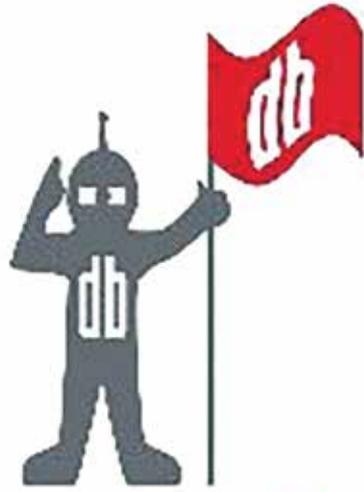
138

FIREARMS/WEAPONS SEIZED

\$415m*

CASH SEIZED (AUD)

*due to confirmation of amounts and weights (and data quality) results may increase and decrease.)



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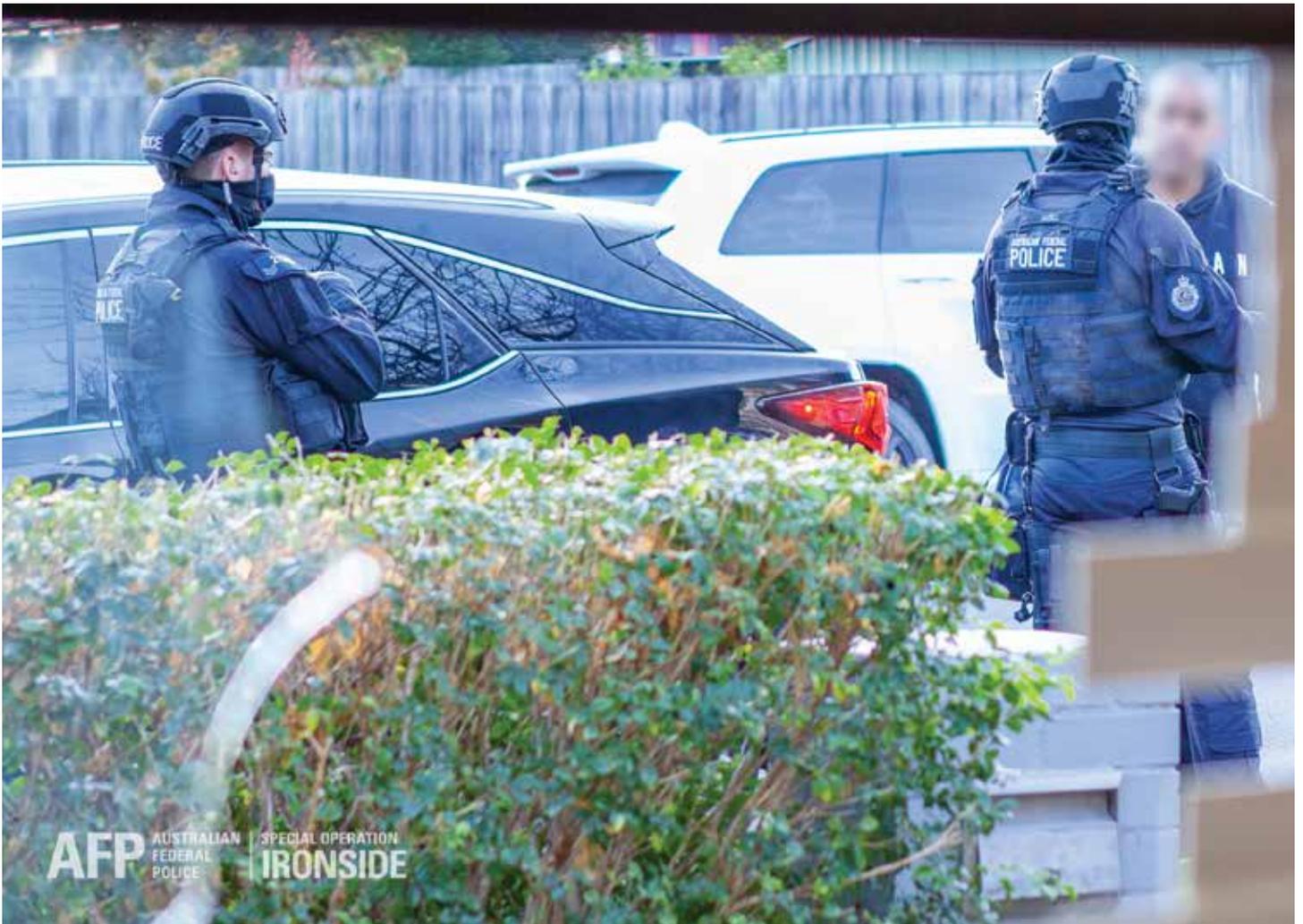
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Operation Ironside

Smashing criminal networks

Operation IRONSIDE is a long-term, covert investigation into transnational and serious organised crime allegedly responsible for large drug imports, drug manufacturing and attempts to kill.

For almost three years, the AFP and the FBI have monitored criminals' encrypted communications over a Dedicated Encrypted Communications Platform.

The AFP built a capability that allowed law enforcement to access, decrypt and read communications on the platform.

The AFP and FBI were able to capture all the data sent between devices using the platform.

How law enforcement infiltrated the networks

The opportunity

2018: The takedown of the Phantom Secure Network left a hole in the market for encrypted communications. More than 14,000 Phantom Secure devices existed in Australia. Criminals needed a new way to hide their communications from law enforcement.

The idea

The concept for operation IRONSIDE was the result of a partnership between the AFP and FBI after the take down of the Phantom Secure Network.

The development

The AFP built a capability that allowed law enforcement to access, decrypt and read communications on the ANØM platform, it was covertly run by the FBI.

The devices

Devices were made to look like a normal phone with the encrypted messaging app hidden behind a calculator app. The app had a variety of features including:

- Self-expiring messages
- Ability to take, pixelate and send photos to other users
- Push to talk feature with voice alteration, and
- Secure file storage.

The operation

ANØM was introduced into the market and distributed by criminal networks. The AFP built and trained computers to monitor messages for key criminal themes and threats.

The customers

The platform was introduced into criminal markets and was allowed to organically grow within organised crime.

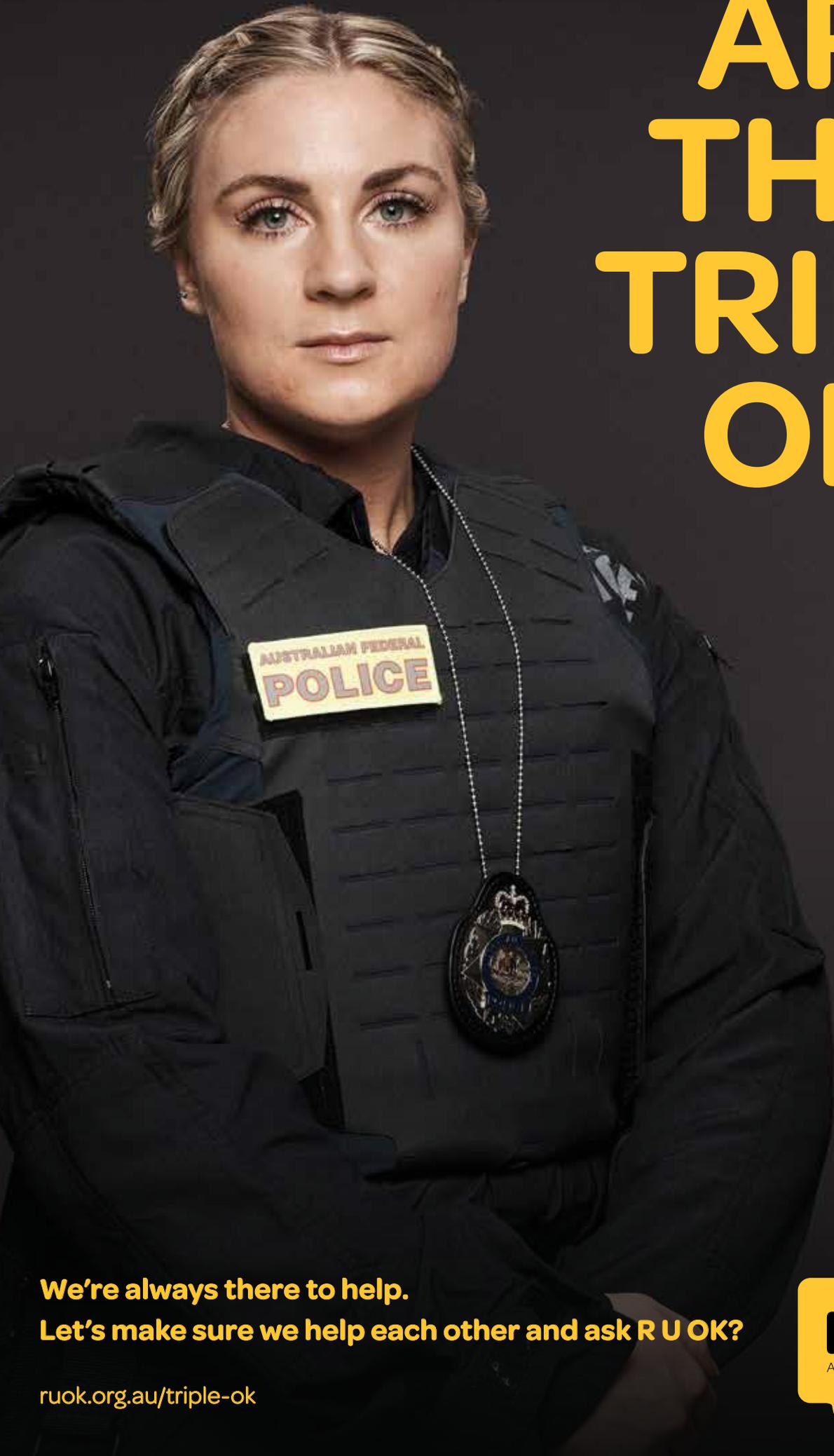
The disruption

In 2019, the first arrests take place off Operation IRONSIDE intelligence.

The outcomes

2021: Operation IRONSIDE has significantly disrupted organised crime networks that threaten Australian communities. Criminals will have to consider alternative ways to communicate, taking greater risks.

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AFP-led Operation Ironside smashes organised crime

An Australian Federal Police-led operation has charged more than one hundred organised crime members after developing a world-leading capability to see encrypted communications used exclusively by organised crime.

The encrypted communications – which allegedly included plots to kill, mass drug trafficking and gun distribution – were decrypted from a platform covertly run by the FBI.

More than 4,000 members from the AFP and state and territory police have been involved in the execution of hundreds of warrants since 7 June, 2021, under Operation Ironside, which covertly began three years ago.

Operation Ironside has led to the arrest of 224 offenders on 526 charges in every mainland Australian state.

3.7 tonnes of drugs, 104 number of weapons, \$44,934,457 million in cash, and assets expected to run into the millions of dollars, have been seized under Operation Ironside since 2018.

The AFP also acted on 20 threats to kill, potentially saving the lives of a significant number of innocent bystanders, with intelligence referred to state police agencies which took immediate action.

More arrests are expected domestically and offshore under a coordinated global response connected to Operation Ironside.

The AFP is also likely to seek extradition requests of a number of persons of interest living overseas. It comes as there have been tonnes of drugs and hundreds of arrests overseas.

The AFP will allege offenders linked to Australian-based Italian mafia, outlaw motorcycle gangs, Asian crime syndicate and Albanian organised crime are among those charged under Operation Ironside.

Operation Ironside began almost three years ago and is the Australian component of a long-term, international, covert investigation. The FBI and AFP targeted the dedicated encrypted communications platform, which was used exclusively by organised crime.

After working in close partnership on Operation Safe Cracking to take down the encrypted platform provider Phantom

Secure, the AFP and FBI worked together to fill the vacuum.

The FBI had access to a new app, named ANØM, and began running it without the knowledge of the criminal underworld.

The AFP provided the highly skilled-technical staff, and capability to decrypt and read encrypted communications in real time, giving law enforcement an edge it had never had before.

AFP Commissioner Reece Kershaw thanked the FBI for its cooperation, along with the 18 countries that worked with the AFP to maintain the integrity of the platform.

As part of the global operation more than 9000 officers from law enforcement have deployed to the international efforts. Commissioner Kershaw acknowledged the significant resources provided by Australia's state and territory police during the days of resolution.

"Today, Australia is a much safer country because of the extraordinary outcome under Operation Ironside," Commissioner Kershaw said.

"It highlights how devastatingly-effective the AFP is when it works with local and global partners, and takes its fight against transnational organised crime offshore.

"This world-first operation will give the AFP, state and territory police years of intelligence and evidence.

"There is also the potential for a number of cold cases to be solved because of Operation Ironside.

"However, tomorrow, and in the future, law enforcement will come up against serious challenges.

"ANØM was an influential encrypted communications app but there are even bigger encrypted platforms that are being used by transnational and serious organised criminals targeting Australia.

"They are almost certainly using those encrypted platforms to flood Australia with drugs, guns and undermine our economy by laundering billions of dollars of illicit profit.

"Organised crime syndicates target Australia, because sadly, the drug market is so lucrative. Australians are among the world's biggest drug takers.

"One of the causes behind domestic violence, sexual assault, neglect of children and unspeakable tragedy, is illicit drugs.

"Our first responders, our teachers and every Australian should be able to go to work and live in our communities without being harmed by an individual under the influence of dangerous drugs.

The app ANØM was installed on mobile phones that were stripped of other capability. The mobile phones, which were bought on the black market, could not make calls or send emails. It could only send messages to another device that had the organised crime app. Criminals needed to know a criminal to get a device.

The devices organically circulated and grew in popularity among criminals, who were confident of the legitimacy of the app because high-profile organised crime figures vouched for its integrity.

"These criminal influencers put the AFP in the back pocket of hundreds of alleged offenders.

"Essentially, they have handcuffed each other by endorsing and trusting ANØM and openly communicating on it – not knowing we were watching the entire time," Commissioner Kershaw said.

FBI International Operations Division Legal Attaché for Canberra Anthony Russo said criminals around the world had long used encrypted criminal communications platforms to avoid law enforcement detection.

"The FBI, with our international partners, will continue to adapt to criminal behaviour and develop novel approaches to bring these criminals to justice," said the FBI's Anthony Russo.

"We appreciate our long standing partnership with the Australian Federal Police in the fight against transnational organised crime."



Encryption Criminals & Operation Ironside

MR REECE P KERSHAW, APM

Commissioner, Australian Federal Police

About a year ago, I sent a direct warning to criminals. I said the Australian Federal Police:

“Will be relentless. We will outsmart you and we will always be a step ahead”.

I declared, “The full force of the Australian Federal Police is coming for you”.

When I made those remarks, the AFP – together with the FBI – was covertly undertaking what has been referred to in Australia, as the “sting of the century”.

Back then, we knew Operation Ironside would be significant, but the breadth and the scale of drug trafficking and other criminality uncovered has been staggering.

Operation Ironside, a milestone in the AFP’s 40-year history, has been the largest organised crime operation in the Southern Hemisphere.

The AFP is like no other agency in this country because of our international reach and our partnerships.

We are the only agency that can take action across the spectrum of the drug business model – we can attack drug traffickers’ operations, logistics, finances and communications – both onshore and offshore.

However, Operation Ironside was only made possible because of the AFP’s law enforcement relationships built over decades, our presence in 33 countries, our technical capabilities and reputation as one of the most respected police forces in the world.

Significant cooperation by state law enforcement and federal agencies was also integral and **I would like to thank my counterparts, especially the Australian Border Force and the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, for their support.**

Operation Ironside was enabled through a new dedicated encrypted communications platform, named ANØM, which we were ready to release into the criminal marketplace.



While the FBI controlled and owned ANØM, that in itself would never have been enough to identify and bring to justice those criminals using the platform.

For years, a small team within the AFP and the FBI had planned law enforcement’s Holy Grail: seeing what criminals were planning over encrypted communications in real time, and without them even knowing.

AFP officers, who were relentless with finding this Holy Grail, would walk into their bunker every day and be greeted by a message one of them had scrawled on a white board: *The obstacle is the way.*

It was a shortened version of the Marcus Aurelius quote, “The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way”.

They lived, dreamed and even in their own time toiled away to find the way through.

Those AFP members were the ones who provided the ingenuity to read decrypted messages in real time.

That break through, with the platform secretly run by the FBI, has been devastatingly effective.

Many of those offenders who I had in mind last year when I declared the



“AFP is coming”, are now facing jail terms’ that carry life imprisonment.

Collectively, these alleged drug traffickers, violent criminals and money launderers are facing hundreds of years in jail.

Others will soon receive a knock at their door from law enforcement – whether they are in Australia or overseas.

As of the 25th of July, Operation Ironside has charged 289 offenders with 724 charges – the majority relating to drug crime.

Almost 5 tonnes of drugs and 138 firearms and weapons, including military-grade automatic firearms and power gel explosives, have been seized.

And during the life of Operation Ironside, more than \$49 million in ill-gotten cash has been seized.

The AFP-led Criminal Assets Confiscation Team restrained about \$19 million in assets, including bank accounts, real estate, luxury handbags, high-end watches, cryptocurrency and cars – including a Holden VL Walkinshaw and a Shelby Mustang in climate-controlled vehicle bubbles.

When AFP officers explained court-issued proceeds of crime orders were civil court orders and not criminal arrest warrants, one alleged offender stated: “This is worse than going to jail, you’re going to take my houses”.

The court orders targeted outlaw motorcycle gang leadership, illicit drug syndicates, ANØM device distributors, Italian organised crime and trusted insiders, like baggage handlers and postal workers.

These workers who have knowledge of logistics chains and facilitate crime for organised crime syndicates are a focus for the AFP.

The AFP is methodically identifying these trusted insiders who are working for criminals.

Intelligence reveals trusted insiders charged between 15 to 25 per cent of the drugs they were moving around the country.

Divers, who placed or retrieved drug packages, would take a cut of between 10 and 15 per cent.

I can reveal today that 29 trusted insiders have been arrested under Operation Ironside.

At least 20 of those arrested had previously held an aviation or maritime security identification card.

Private sector employees included freight forwarding and logistics companies, couriers, trucking firms, those working at ports, airports and mail centres.

Lawyers, accountants, and some government officials have also been identified as enablers of Australia’s multi-billion-dollar drug trafficking industry.

ANØM was a small platform but it has provided us with a front row seat into transnational serious organised crime – or TSOC as it is known.

The acronym TSOC is used by law enforcement agencies but that terminology fails to properly explain the danger those criminals present to our community.

They are Australian outlaw motorcycle gangs, Italian organised crime, Asian Triads and Mexican cartels who launder their drug profits through money laundering organisations.

They are ambivalent to the misery caused by illicit drugs, or if civilians are killed in the crossfire of their drug wars.

A patched member’s ideology is unadulterated greed through the relentless trafficking of illicit drugs.

It drives them, they recruit for it and they kill for it.

That ideology has killed more Australians than terrorism. A terrorist attack pierces the heart of our democracy, shatters our confidence and fuels fear.

The impact of TSOC is akin to death by a thousand cuts.

Not only do our communities haemorrhage from illicit drug use but these violent, trigger-happy, organised criminals also strike at the heart of our democracy by undermining our national security, our economy, social security system, and our social cohesion, especially in regional communities.

Threats to life *will always* be a priority for the AFP – whether that is from a lone wolf attack or an attack by the Lone Wolf Motorcycle Gang.

Australia has many lines of defence, including; the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, the Australian Defence Force, the Australian Border Force, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, AUSTRAC, and of course, the Australian Federal Police.

These are our national security defenders which protect our country from well-resourced, coordinated, global criminals who undermine our democracy and rule of law.

But whether it is from foreign interference, terrorism, child predators or state-sponsored or syndicate-led cyber criminals who attack our critical infrastructure or cripple our financial institutions for ransom, the AFP is uniquely placed to ensure we protect and guard Australia’s national security.

The enduring and emerging crimes that threaten to undermine our national security **are the AFP’s priorities:**

- Counter terrorism and espionage and foreign interference;
- Child exploitation;
- Cyber;
- Fraud; and
- Transnational serious organised crime.

But to beat the organised crime that has the nefarious ability to undermine our way of life and create chaos requires ever-evolving legislation, technology, investment and a deep understanding of the criminal environment.

And that’s why Operation Ironside has been so important – it has helped Australian law enforcement, our Five Eyes partners and other global law enforcement agencies to strengthen the lines of defence that protect our countries.

For law enforcement focussed agencies, national security intelligence is indispensable.

And intelligence from Operation Ironside revealed one outlaw motorcycle gang was making \$21 million a month from selling illicit drugs.

One kilogram of methamphetamine is bought for about \$1800 in Myanmar and sold wholesale in Australia for between \$63,000 and \$150,000.

One kilogram of cocaine costs about \$2300 in Colombia and is sold domestically here for between \$220,000 and \$450,000.

Almost one-third of alleged offenders arrested under Operation Ironside were outlaw motorcycle gang members or people working for them.

Of those arrested, three-quarters are Comanchero members or supporters.

Nearly all of the 21 threats to life identified by Operation Ironside were directly linked to outlaw motorcycle gangs.

One outlaw motorcycle gang planned to kill a family of five because they could not find a relative of theirs who failed to pay a drug debt.

continued on page 22



continued from page 21

And if an alleged Comanchero plan to murder an associate with a fully automatic submachine gun at a busy café strip was not intercepted on ANØM, it is very likely families would have been collateral damage.

That military-grade weapon was capable of firing more than 10 rounds a second. We may have faced the biggest loss of civilian life in recent history.

As a country, we must be honest about the effects of illicit drugs and the unspeakable crimes they cause.

Some of these crimes are so confronting that when the news of these harrowing cases break, they make us instinctively check where our kids are, or pick up the phone to speak to a loved one.

I can't imagine the heavy grief of the parents whose children were killed and injured by a motorist in Sydney's west in February 2020.

When I was informed about that horrific tragedy, I remember feeling a moment of great sadness. Four children killed – three injured.

I think most parents went home and hugged their children a little harder and for a little longer that day.

A feeling of utter shock was also shared by the nation when four brave Victorian police officers were killed by a truck driver on Melbourne's Eastern Freeway in April 2020.

Sadly, there are many more examples.

And, after the grief, there's the outrage and demand for justice.

But there is a common thread.

The Sydney driver, now jailed for killing those four children, had a blood-alcohol level three times the legal limit but also had cocaine and MDMA in his system at the time of the crash.

The now-jailed truck driver was high on methamphetamine at the time he killed four brave Victorian police officers and they will not be forgotten.

There is no concept of personalised use of drugs; one user's actions can have far-reaching consequences for those around them – loved ones or strangers.

The 2021 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drugs in Australia report said deaths involving methamphetamine and other stimulants are increasing in Australia.

The report found a rapid increase in the number of deaths involving

methamphetamine and other stimulants, with the death rate in 2019, four times higher than that in 2000.

Methamphetamine-related deaths alone almost doubled during the seven years between 2009 and 2015.

The most common manner of methamphetamine-related death was accidental drug toxicity.

However, natural disease such as coronary disease, stroke, kidney and liver disease together with suicide and accidents comprised more than half.

But it is the addiction to illicit drugs – especially methamphetamine – that is truly horrifying.

There are too many cases where children are going hungry or neglected because their parents are continuously feeding their addiction.

As a society, we have to ensure parents are not buying meth over milk.

I'm told there's little more gut-wrenching than hearing a newborn wail as they struggle with withdrawing from methamphetamine.

One child born to meth-addicted parents is one child too many.

In one state in Australia, methamphetamine is now a major factor in 39 per cent of cases where a child must be taken into care – an increase of more than 30 per cent in just two years.

Most drug users need to get their drugs from someone, and overwhelmingly there is a direct link to transnational serious organised crime.

Every drug trafficker and organised criminal charged by the AFP ensures our communities are safer.

First responders and our front-line workers – whether they are police, nurses, doctors, paramedics or teachers – should be able to go to work without being violently assaulted by an uncontrollable addict.

And parents should be able to drive their kids to school – or let their kids go and buy an ice cream – without the fear a loaded weapon behind the wheel of a car could change their lives forever.

We also need to think about what drug manufacturing does to our environment.

So-called party drugs are made with so many corrosive chemicals that in the countries they are made the earth is left scorched and local waterways are poisoned.

Trees and plants are felled to extract precursors such as safrole for

MDMA production or ephedrine for methamphetamine production.

Waste materials used to make drugs are burned to conceal illegal activity, creating extra pollutants.

As a country we have made great strides in healthier living – more exercise, drinking less, being sun smart and giving up tobacco – yet too many are ignoring the damage that illicit drugs do to our bodies and our minds.

There are a variety of commentators who have a position on illicit drugs.

This is a policy matter for governments. But what Operation Ironside has proven is that **organised crime will not stop targeting our community while Australians' appetite for illicit drugs remains so high.**

Illicit drugs continue to embolden organised crime, makes them richer and enables them to buy more guns and pay for more murders.

This is the link we need to impress upon the community – opening the flood gates to illicit drugs is a beacon for those syndicates and cartels that makes Australia a less safe and less fair society.

It undermines our national security.

Today, I have a series of calls to action.

First, if you take illicit drugs, please seek the necessary help to stop.

Equally, if you are aware of someone selling or trafficking drugs please alert law enforcement – it could save your life or that of a loved one.

To parents. We still need you to have conversations with your children about the dangers of illicit drugs. And apart from health concerns, talk to them about how life-limiting it can be if they are charged with possession.

It could rule them out of their dream job or holidaying overseas because convictions could prevent them from entering another country.

Finally, to the community at large.

We need you to be engaged in this debate and think of it through the prism of how drug users are arming and bankrolling murderers, enabling violence in our suburbs and ruining the lives of our children.

Each dollar spent on illicit drugs facilitates a supply chain of violence and horror stretching from our community all the way overseas.

We will only be able to take the profit out of the drug trade when there's no or little demand.



Meantime, the AFP, with its law enforcement partners both here and offshore, are whole-heartedly committed to arresting and disrupting the criminals who facilitate the illicit drug trade and other organised criminal activity.

Because of other dedicated encrypted communication services, we don't know the full breadth of transnational serious organised crime in Australia.

But intelligence from Operation Ironside revealed there were 10 tonnes of drugs with a street value of \$10 billion heading to Australia when the AFP and our state partners went to resolution. That's 10 tonnes.

Those shipments were coming from Spain, Ecuador, Hong Kong, Brazil and Malaysia.

Our intelligence indicates those drug ventures distributing methamphetamine and cocaine have been abandoned.

It is likely some of it is at the bottom of the ocean.

Back in Australia, Operation Ironside has rattled organised crime.

They are worried about who is watching or listening to their communications so some have returned to drug deals of the old days – in their swim wear at the beach having face-to-face conversations to show they do not have a listening device on their body.

We also know drug prices have been impacted by Operation Ironside. In some states the street value of illicit drugs has increased by up to 50 per cent.

And I can reveal today that a drug venture transporting cocaine to Australia wants to charge double the amount because of Operation Ironside.

Criminals in Australia linked to ANØM have changed addresses and their vehicles to evade police.

And we know, Ciphre – which sells dedicated hardened encrypted devices – is refusing to renew subscriptions in Australia because it does not want to be associated with criminality.

This makes it harder for drug traffickers, money launderers and violent offenders to communicate on encrypted devices.

We are under no illusion that we have a challenge in front of us that will require new laws, better tech and new investment to keep Australians safe and protect Australia's interests.

To ensure we can continue to outsmart these criminals, emerging technology, intelligence and surveillance capabilities will be necessary.

More arrests and disruptions will come as a result of Operation Ironside and our broader efforts, but it won't be enough to stem the tsunami of drugs coming into the country.

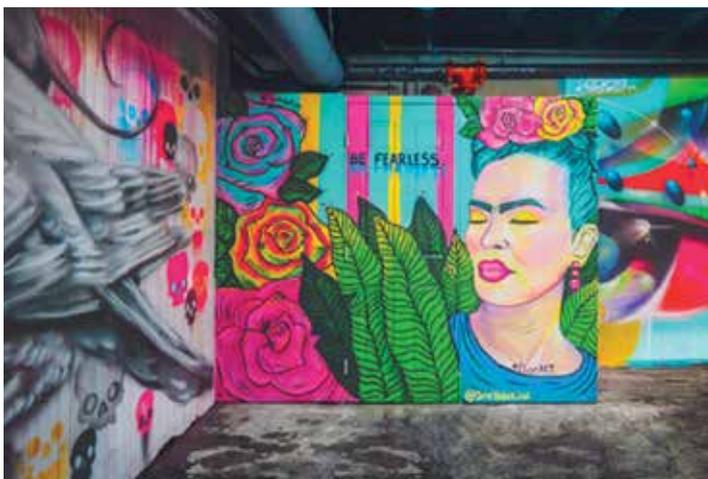
However, in keeping with a tradition I started last year, I will provide another warning to organised criminals, outlaw motorcycle gangs, drug traffickers, money launderers and those who believe they will get away with their crimes.

The AFP has another ingenious plan – in fact it was well underway before we revealed Operation Ironside.

We won't tell you what it is. The only thing I will tell you is that we are coming. Again.



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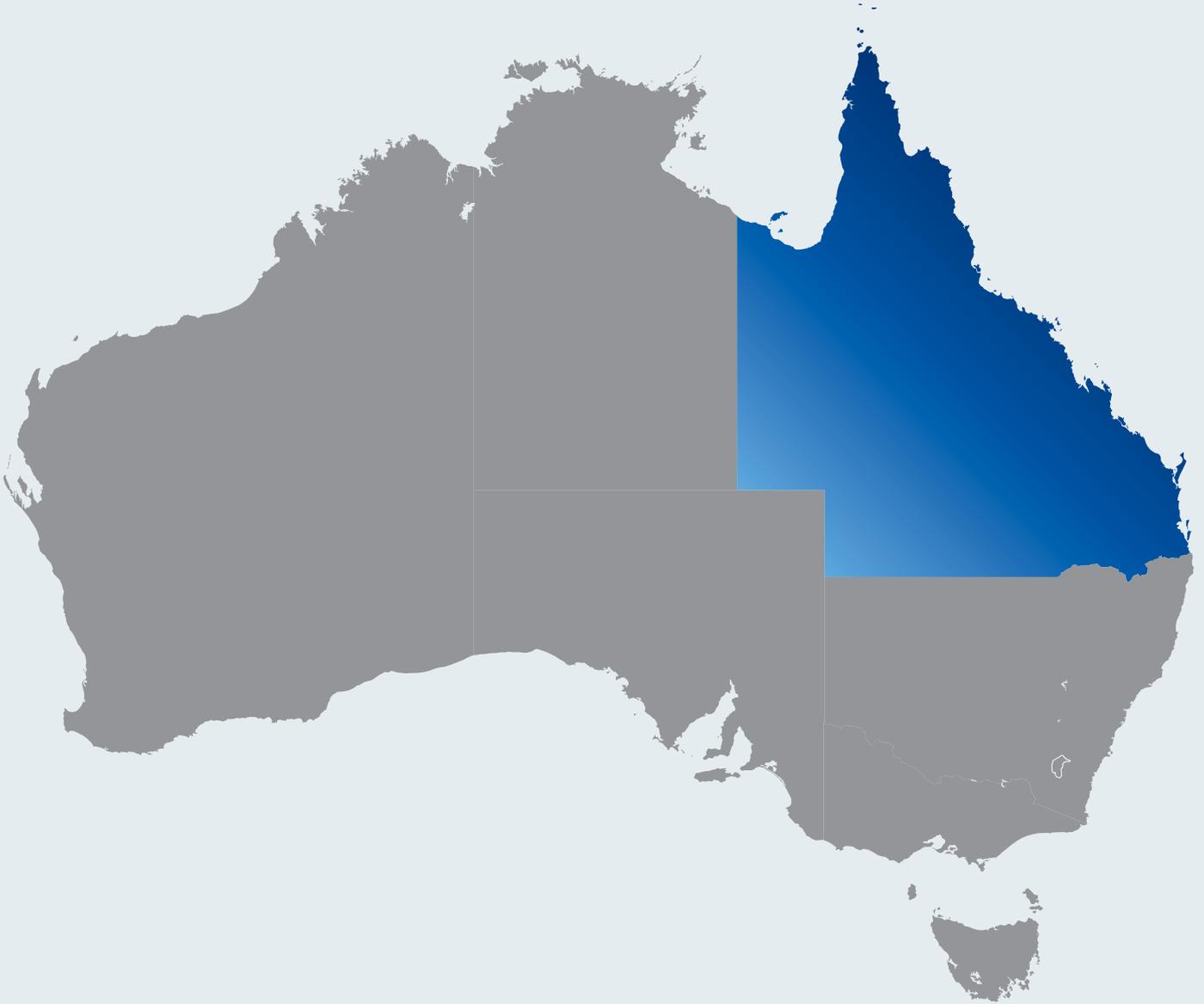
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Operation Ironside QUEENSLAND



41

OFFENDERS CHARGED

191

OFFENCE COUNT #

971 kg

DRUGS SEIZED

59

SEARCH WARRANTS

7

FIREARMS/WEAPONS SEIZED

\$600k

CASH SEIZED (AUD)



QLD: IRONSIDE NORTHERN SHROPSHIRE

A major criminal syndicate trafficking firearms and illicit drugs through southeast Queensland and interstate has been smashed following intelligence gathered by the Australian Federal Police's Operation Ironside.

Twelve people allegedly involved in the syndicate, which had links to serious organised crime, have been arrested since 18 May with a further two given notices to appear. Nearly 60 charges have flowed from the operation with some alleged offenders facing up to 20 years in prison and mandatory prison terms.

Officers from the AFP, Queensland Police Service and New South Wales Police have seized more than \$300,000 in cash, luxury vehicles including a Mercedes Benz, watches including a \$200,000 Rolex and designer clothing they will allege are all the proceeds of crime.

Search warrants executed at more than 20 properties from north of Brisbane down to Ballina, NSW, in the past few weeks have discovered a cache of weapons including semi-automatic rifles, ammunition, fake identifications, drugs and drug production equipment.

Police also seized electronic evidence showing the syndicate had the capability to manufacture and alter weapons.

In total, police have located nearly 200kg of cannabis and 758 plants, more than 2kg of cocaine, steroids, human growth hormone and methamphetamine.

On 18 May, police executed a search warrant on a Mt Mee property, in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland, where they discovered 2kg of cocaine, firearms and an indoor hydroponic cannabis production room.

Officers seized 758 cannabis plants and 180g of dried cannabis as well as cocaine cutting agents, a cocaine block press, firearms and ammunition, tools for producing methamphetamine, a book on drug production, scales, packaging materials and \$2000 cash.

A 36-year-old man was charged with 14 state-based offences including drug possession, drug production and unlawful possession of weapons and was given a notice to appear.



Police executing a search warrant at a Mt Mee property on May 18 seized a semi-automatic rifle.

A 31-year-old man was charged with two counts of possessing a dangerous drug and one count each of possessing an item and one count of possessing a utensil and also given a notice to appear.

On 28 May, intelligence gathered under Operation Ironside disrupted a courier allegedly moving cannabis between New South Wales and Queensland.

NSW Police acting on AFP intelligence conducted a tactical traffic stop on a white van travelling on the Pacific Highway south of Byron Bay. Inside the van, police allegedly found 166kg of cannabis packed into vacuum seal bags inside cardboard boxes and a Navman with the address of a Brisbane property entered into the system.

A 39-year-old man and a 28-year-old man were each charged with possessing a large commercial quantity of cannabis, and appeared in Court on Monday 31 May, 2021.

About 5pm on Jun 6 2021, Queensland Police intercepted a white utility vehicle being driven by a 26-year-old man near Ormeau on the Gold Coast.

The man was found in possession of a six shot revolver, approximately 150 rounds of ammunition and a USB. He was

charged with possessing a firearm in a public place, which carries a mandatory one year term in jail, and authority required to possess explosives, relating to the ammunition. He was granted bail on 7 June with reporting conditions.

From 7 to 8 June, AFP and QPS officers executed search warrants at more than 20 properties across Southeast Queensland, including on the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast hinterland and a luxury Brisbane hotel room.

Seizures of hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash, a variety of drugs, including cannabis, cocaine, methamphetamine, steroids and human growth hormone as well as encrypted phones at locations across southeast Queensland revealed a sophisticated network for moving, hiding and distributing illicit drugs and weapons across the region and interstate.

Two properties contained equipment to grow and manufacture large quantities of cannabis or methamphetamine respectively along with instructions for producing drugs and associated paraphernalia.

Six syndicate members were charged with trafficking in dangerous drugs and face up to 20 years in jail.



QLD: IRONSIDE NORTHERN EUMENES TASKFORCE SENTRY

A Brisbane-based syndicate allegedly importing drugs through international mail has been dismantled following a joint Australian Federal Police (AFP), Queensland Police Service (QPS) and Australian Border Force (ABF) investigation acting on intelligence developed by Operation IRONSIDE.

The syndicate allegedly hid drugs inside computer hard drives mailed from the United States and planned to distribute them throughout Southeast Queensland using 'dead drops'.

As a result of Operation IRONSIDE intelligence, ABF officers in late April 2021 examined packages sent from the United States to Australia, which were allegedly found to contain 3.8 kilograms of methamphetamine hidden in computer hard drives.

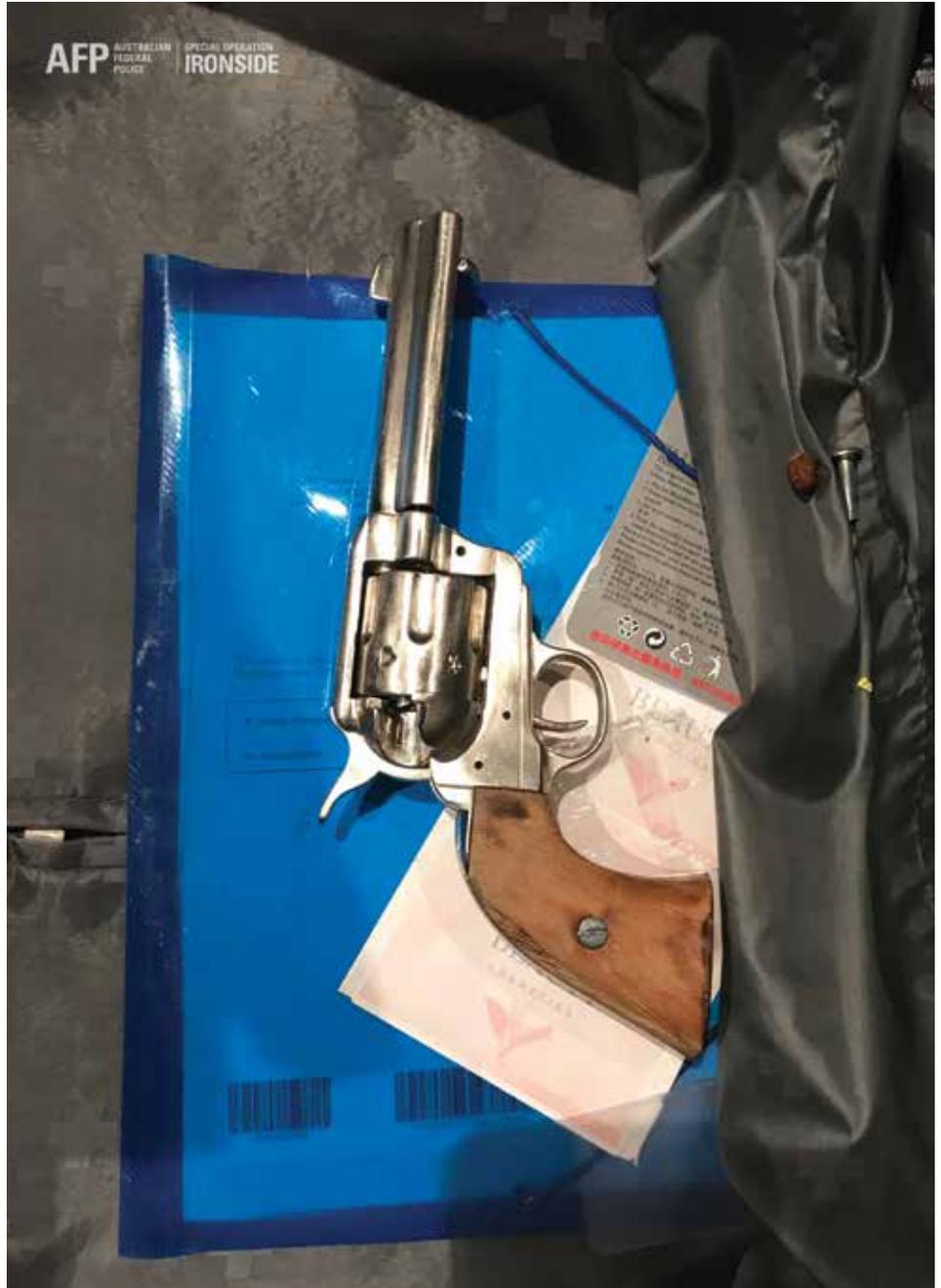
Police removed the illicit drugs before delivering the packages to an apartment building in Woolloongabba on 17 May.

They discovered a criminal safe house across the hall from the address where the package had been sent. A 33-year-old man was arrested after he allegedly collected the packages from the delivery address and moved them to the safe house.

A search of the safe house located two kilograms of meth, 88 MDMA tablets, a mobile phone jammer, a quantity of cutting agents, false identifications, 13 mobile phones and three laptop computers.

The man was charged with trafficking a dangerous drug, contrary to section 6 of the *Drugs Misuse Act 1986* (QLD), and attempt to possess a dangerous drug, contrary to section 9 of the *Drugs Misuse Act 1986*. He faces up to 25 years in jail if convicted.

The next day (18 May), police executed a search warrant at a storage unit in Underwood and found approximately \$250,000 in cash and a shot gun. Analysis of CCTV footage allegedly revealed a 31-year-old Coorparoo man opening the storage unit. Further investigations revealed another suspected safe house in Kangaroo Point,



A 33-year-old woman was arrested at the Kangaroo Point property, where police seized a revolver with no serial number

which was occupied by the 31-year-old man's ex-partner.

On 2 June, the 31-year-old man, the alleged syndicate leader, was arrested at a house in Coorparoo. Officers seized two mobile phones and a small amount of cocaine from the house.

A 33-year-old woman was arrested at the Kangaroo Point property, where

police seized a revolver with no serial number, about 154 grams of meth and 1 gram of cocaine, scales, bags, heat sealers, label makers, fake identification – including Medicare cards, a passport copy and driver's licence – mobile phones and \$2030 in cash.

The 31-year-old man faced Brisbane Magistrates Court on 3 June, where he



was remanded until 14 June. He has been charged with:

- Trafficking Dangerous Drugs, contrary to section 5 of the *Drugs Misuse Act 1986*;
- Drugs Misuse Act 1986 – Section 9(1) & (c) – Possess Dangerous Drugs
- Drugs Misuse Act 1986 – Section 10(1)(b) – Possessing anything used in the commission of a crime
- Drugs Misuse Act 1986 – Section [DM] 10A(1)(d) – Possession of property suspected of being the proceeds of an offence under Drugs Misuse Act
- Criminal Code – Section [CC] 408D(1) – Obtaining or Dealing with Identification Information
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- Criminal Code – Section [CC] 408D(1) – Obtaining or Dealing with Identification Information
- Criminal Code – 408D(1A) – Possessing equipment for purpose of committing/facilitating the commission of an offence against s 408D(1)
- [WA] 50A(1)
- Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996 – Section 146(1) – 1 x Possession of Restricted Drug (Viagra)

The drug trafficking charge carries a maximum penalty of 25 years' imprisonment.

The 33-year-old woman also faced court on 3 June, where she was granted conditional bail to reappear on 28 June. She has been charged with:

- Drugs Misuse Act 1986 – Section 5 – Trafficking Dangerous Drugs
- Drugs Misuse Act 1986 – Section 9(1) & (b) – Possess Dangerous Drugs
- Drugs Misuse Act 1986 – Section [DM] 10A(1)(d) – Possession of property suspected of being the proceeds of an offence under Drugs Misuse Act
- Drugs Misuse Act 1986 – Section 10A(1)(b) – Possess property

suspected of having been used in connection with the commission of a drug offence

- Drugs Misuse Act 1986 – Section 10A(1)(a) – Possess property suspected of having been acquired for the purpose of committing a drug offence
- Criminal Code – Section [CC] 408D(1) – Obtaining or Dealing with Identification Information
- Criminal Code – Section [CC] 408D(1) – Obtaining or Dealing with Identification Information
- Criminal Code – Section [CC] 408D(1) – Obtaining or Dealing with Identification Information
- Criminal Code – Section [CC] 408D(1) – Obtaining or Dealing with Identification Information
- Weapons Act – Section 50(1)(C) (i) – Unlawful possession of weapons Category D/H/R weapon
- Criminal Code – Section 205A – Contravening order about information necessary to access information stored electronically

The drug trafficking charge carries a maximum penalty of 25 years' imprisonment.

QLD: IRONSIDE NORTHERN DESTINY

A serious organised criminal group allegedly manufacturing and trafficking MDMA in clandestine labs around Brisbane has been dismantled with intelligence from the Australian Federal Police's Operation Ironside.

Six people have been arrested including a patched member of the Comancheros as part of Operation Ironside Northern – Destiny, a joint investigation by the Australian Federal Police and Queensland Police.

The senior Comanchero, a 34-year-old man from Burbank, on Brisbane's southside, was arrested on Monday (7 June 2021) as police executed a series of coordinated search warrants across the city. He was charged with one count of produce dangerous drugs with criminal aggravation organised crime and one count of possess anything for use in the commission of a crime. He faced Brisbane

Magistrates Court on Tuesday 8 June.

An associate of the 34-year-old man was also arrested at Moorooka, south of Brisbane, and was charged with six offences including produce dangerous drugs with criminal aggravation organised crime and possess dangerous drugs (cannabis). He faced Brisbane Magistrates Court on Tuesday 8 June.

Two other men, aged 34 and 28, were arrested at a property in Ipswich, which police will allege contained a clandestine drug lab. They were both charged with three offences including produce dangerous drugs with criminal aggravation organised crime.

The arrests this week follow a string of QPS search warrants executed on 8 May 2021 at premises in Ipswich, North Stradbroke Island and Cleveland.

During a search of a Murphy Street, Ipswich, address, investigators located

a commercial pill press and illicit laboratory equipment suspected of being used to produce MDMA.

Approximately 60 pills suspected to be MDMA were also located at the address.

Specialist officers from QPS Illicit Laboratory Investigation Team (ILIT) and Ipswich District attended the location to remove the items.

Three people were arrested at the scene and charged with drug offences.

A 38-year-old St George man and 28-year-old Ipswich woman were charged with one count each of possession of a relevant thing and possession of a dangerous drug.

A 34-year-old Dunwich man was charged with possession of a relevant thing.

All appeared in Ipswich Magistrates Court on June 8.



Operation Ironside

NEW SOUTH WALES



74

OFFENDERS CHARGED

155

OFFENCE COUNT #

1925kg

DRUGS SEIZED

184

SEARCH WARRANTS

47

FIREARMS/WEAPONS SEIZED

\$23.1m

CASH SEIZED (AUD)



A 40 year old man was arrested at a Mt Kiera home.

NSW: IRONSIDE EAST GALVESTON

Operation IRONSIDE EAST-GALVESTON is a National Anti-Gangs Squad (NAGS) investigation into the Sergeant-at-Arms of the NSW South Coast Comancheros Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMCG) and his criminal network allegedly involved in money laundering and importing, manufacturing and trafficking illicit drugs in the NSW South Coast region.

The NSW South Coast based criminal syndicate under AFP investigation was allegedly using encrypted communications devices to facilitate their criminal activities. The investigation revealed planned drug importations, international drug trafficking networks, local drug manufacturing and trafficking networks who also allegedly dealt in the proceeds of crime.

A 40-year-old Mount Keira man believed to be the Comancheros OMCG Sergeant-at-Arms in NSW South Coast was identified as the alleged director of the criminal enterprise responsible for organising the importation and trafficking of illicit drugs within the NSW South Coast.

Evidence gathered during this investigation resulted in AFP detectives with NSW Police officers from the NSW Police Southern Region and the Criminal

Groups Squad executing search warrants on Sunday, 6 June in Mount Keira, Horsley, Shell Cove and Grabben Gullen.

The Mount Keira man was arrested at his home in the early morning for conspiring to import cocaine, dealing in proceeds of crime and directing the activities of a criminal organisation.

With an associate based offshore it's further alleged the Mount Keira man was conspiring to import a marketable quantity of cocaine into Australia from Greece, with the drugs alleged to be hidden in olive oil.

A separate target in Operation IRONSIDE EAST-GALVESTON was a 31-year-old Horsley man – believed to be an associate of the Mount Keira man. The man was also arrested at his home on Sunday, 6 June, charged with money laundering offences along with possessing drugs and firearms.

Operation IRONSIDE EAST-GALVESTON has dismantled a significant drug manufacturing and trafficking network causing substantial harm to communities in the NSW South Coast region.

The AFP has not ruled out the possibility of further arrests as aspects of this investigation remain ongoing.

Statistics

- Two arrests
- Five search warrants executed
- 150 police members deployed

Seized items

- One cash counting machine
- Approx. \$520,000 cash in multiple bundles – approx. \$290,000 allegedly linked to the Mount Keira man and approx. \$230,000 allegedly linked to the Horsley man
- Comanchero OMCG paraphernalia
- Eleven mobile phones
- Seven encrypted devices
- Three vehicles including an Audi RS7, a Ducati motorcycle and a Harley Davidson with 'Comanchero' insignia
- Multiple satchels of white powder totaling approximately 62 grams suspected to be cocaine
- Approx. two grams of crystal substance suspected to be methamphetamine
- Two unauthorized prohibited firearms including a M4 style Gel Blaster and a Glock style Gel Blaster
- One unauthorised police uniform
- Concealed ammunition
- Steroid tablets



NSW: IRONSIDE EAST REGA

Operation IRONSIDE EAST-REGA is an investigation into a criminal syndicate involved in drug importation and money laundering, with alleged links to the Lone Wolf Outlaw Motorcycle Gang (OMCG).

The Australian Federal Police investigation has to date resulted in 11 arrests and the seizure of more than 700 kilograms of methamphetamine across multiple phases of the operation.

Police allege the syndicate is controlled by an OMCG member based offshore, who is the organiser of numerous criminal ventures impacting Australia and uses encrypted communications devices to communicate with criminal associates. Within Australia, it is alleged the criminal operations are controlled by a NSW man who oversees criminal activities across the country.

The criminal syndicate has allegedly used encrypted communications devices to execute multiple importations of methamphetamine from the Republic of Korea and to facilitate the distribution of drugs in Australia.

The intelligence gathered during Operation IRONSIDE EAST-REGA identified key members of a money laundering syndicate, significant associates and members of an OMCG, and crucial insights into the syndicate's methamphetamine import methodologies, supply and distribution chains.

Operation IRONSIDE-REGA intelligence into the workings of this criminal syndicate has resulted in multiple overt disruptions and arrests since April 2021.

Phase 1: Two arrested and 289 kilograms of methamphetamine seized

NSW Police Organised Crime Squad and AFP detectives arrested a 40-year-old Woy Woy man and a 28-year-old Kingswood man in April 2021 with a total of 289 kilograms of methamphetamine, and approximately \$300,000 in cash and designer watches seized.

Phase 2: One man charged and 230 kilograms of methamphetamine seized

AFP and NSW Police officers charged a 37-year-old Newcastle man with importing a commercial quantity of a



border controlled drug in May 2021. Two shipments of helical gear drives from the Republic of Korea were seized at Port Botany and found to contain a total of 230 kilograms of methamphetamine.

A further six helical gears containing approximately 270 kilograms of methamphetamine were seized by police in May 2021 during a search warrant at a factory in the Newcastle region.

Phase 3: Two men allegedly linked to a money laundering syndicate arrested

Two men were charged in May 2021 for money laundering offences. They were allegedly found to have in excess of \$1 million cash in their possession, which police will allege to be proceeds of crime.

Following this activity, a 32-year-old Marsden Park man suspected of facilitating the movement of large sums of cash between criminal syndicates was arrested on 3 June 2021. During the searches, approximately \$1.5 million in cash suspected to be proceeds of crime was seized.

A 30-year-old Edmondson Park man was arrested for dealing in proceeds of crime, and a further \$100,000 seized during a search of the man's home.

Phase 4: Four men arrested including the alleged onshore syndicate controller in Australia

AFP and NSW Police officers executed six search warrants on Monday (7 June 2021) across Western Sydney in Bardia, Marsden Park, Erskine Park, Ropes Crossing, Gosford, and St. Leonards.

Four alleged associates of Lone Wolf OMCG were arrested during this activity:

- A 39-year-old Bardia man was arrested at his home and is suspected of being the onshore controller of a criminal syndicate in Australia. He was charged with allegedly directing activities of a criminal organisation and importing a commercial quantity of a border controlled drug.
- A 32-year-old Ropes Crossing man was charged with a money laundering offence and allegedly importing a commercial quantity of methamphetamine.
- A 37-year-old North Gosford man was charged with allegedly importing a commercial quantity of methamphetamine.
- A 37-year-old St Leonards man was charged for allegedly possessing an unlawfully imported border controlled drug, namely methamphetamine.

AFP intelligence has revealed the syndicate also ran an alleged 'hit team' or 'street team', suspected to be carrying out surveillance of their drug trafficking enterprises, using technology. Enquiries into this 'hit team' are continuing.

The AFP is expecting to make further arrests as part of Operation IRONSIDE EAST-REGA.

Seized items

- More than 700 kilograms of methamphetamine
- Approx. \$2.6 million in cash
- Designer watches
- Multiple mobile phones



NSW: IRONSIDE EAST

GALENEUS

Three men have been arrested following an AFP investigation into a syndicate importing border controlled drugs into Australia via the use of trusted insiders in a multinational delivery services company. The syndicate is also involved in the supply of encrypted communication devices on behalf of a high-ranking offshore Comancheros member.

Operation Ironside intelligence uncovered a network allegedly using the international air freight system to import border controlled drugs, with links to a Turkey-based Comancheros OMCG member.

Once in Australia, police allege a 37-year-old Carlton, NSW man, employed as a delivery driver for the delivery services company, collected the parcels and contacted the syndicate, to arrange a time and place where the border controlled drugs were exchanged. Operation Ironside intelligence revealed the group allegedly intended to import drugs on a weekly basis using this methodology.

In late May 2021, a consignment arrived into Sydney from America.

The consignment was examined by Australian Border Force officers and found to contain a white powdery substance inside a protein powder tub. Presumptive testing indicated the presence of cocaine.

The consignment was seized by the AFP and further testing revealed the consignment contained 1kg of cocaine. This amount of cocaine has an estimated street value of approximately \$250,000.

Operation Ironside intelligence identified the 37-year-old delivery driver and a 23-year-old Brighton Le Sands man allegedly attempting to coordinate the delivery of the packages in Sydney.

As a result of the investigation, police also identified a third associate, a 20-year-old Brighton Le Sands man. Police allege these men were involved in the drug supply trade in Sydney.

Throughout the course of the investigation, Operation GALNEUS further revealed an attempt by the 23-year-old Brighton Le Sands man to sell a substance purporting to be methamphetamine.

On 14 May 2021, police allege the Brighton Le Sands man sold a quantity of a substance purporting to

be methamphetamine to a buyer for \$75,000. Operation Ironside intelligence revealed the substance was in fact soda crystals. The Brighton Le Sands man then received orders from an associate with links to an Organised Motorcycle Gang to refund the money.

Police witnessed this transaction and retrieved the substituted package from a garbage bin in a Rockdale street.

On 7 June 2021, AFP officers executed multiple search warrants at premises in Carlton and Brighton Le Sands, NSW, which resulted in the arrest of three men allegedly involved in the importation or supply of border controlled drugs.

Key statistics

- 3 arrests
- 3 search warrants executed

Seized items

- Personal use amounts of cannabis, steroids and cocaine
- One encrypted device
- 2 x cash counting machines
- 2 x gel blasters
- AUD20,000



Operation Ironside **VICTORIA**



50

OFFENDERS CHARGED

152

OFFENCE COUNT #

826kg

DRUGS SEIZED

37

SEARCH WARRANTS

37

FIREARMS/WEAPONS SEIZED

\$16.8m

CASH SEIZED (AUD)



VIC: IRONSIDE SOUTH DIDYMA

Operation IRONSIDE-SOUTH-DIDYMA relates to the arrest of high-priority Melbourne-based organised crime target, who is alleged to have been instrumental in the planning of a 360 kilogram crystal methamphetamine import into Australia in 2020 (Op TIRIDATES).

Police will allege that the Melbourne man is considered to be a significant Victorian-based crime entity and is expected to be charged with drug importation offences as a result of intelligence obtained as part of Operation IRONSIDE-SOUTH-DIDYMA.

The AFP alleges the 38-year-old played a significant role in the importation of 360 kilograms of crystal methamphetamine concealed in a consignment of furniture, shipped from Malaysia into Australia in 2020.

It is alleged he was a ringleader of the criminal syndicate facilitating the methamphetamine import worth an estimated \$180 million dollars.

He is the fourth person to be arrested by the AFP in connection to this import.



The arrest of high-priority Melbourne-based organised crime target, who is alleged to have been instrumental in the planning of a 360 kilogram crystal methamphetamine import concealed in a consignment of furniture, shipped from Malaysia into Australia in 2020 (Op TIRIDATES).



Shared intelligence led to the seizure of a pill press machine, capable of manufacturing around one thousand tablets per minute. Hetforshire: A 34-year-old woman, from Richmond, was arrested after a search warrant at her residential property allegedly located a blue suitcase containing \$700,000 in cash.

VIC: IRONSIDE SOUTH LONDON

Operation IRONSIDE SOUTH-LONDON intelligence passed from the Victoria Joint Organised Crime Task Force (JOCTF) has resulted in the disruption and seizure of an alleged concealed cannabis grow house in Melton, along with the alleged discovery of more than 12 kilograms of cocaine, 1.5 kilograms of MDMA, cash and weapons.

Two 35-year-old men from Melton and Docklands were arrested during separate search warrants executed at their properties as a result of the intelligence shared.

It is alleged a cannabis grow house featuring up to 20 cannabis plants was discovered behind a concealed wall at the Kurrajang home. While a longarm firearm was also located hidden near the door of the Docklands property.

The JOCTF comprises of investigators from the Australian Federal Police (AFP), Victoria Police Service (VICPOL), Australian Border Force (ABF), Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC) and the Department of Home Affairs.

Intelligence from Operation IRONSIDE SOUTH has prevented more than 25 kilograms of MDMA from entering the Victorian community.

A 47-year-old central Victorian man was arrested on 27 April, 2021, and an alleged clandestine lab dismantled near the regional city of Bendigo.

In April, 2017, the AFP passed IRONSIDE intelligence relating to an alleged Victorian drug trafficking and manufacturing syndicate was shared with the Victoria Police Drug Task Force.

This shared intelligence led to the dismantling of a clan lab and arrest of

a 47-year-old man near the regional Victorian city of Bendigo on 27 April, 2021, along with the seizure of 25 kilograms of MDMA tablets, an estimated 75 kilograms of powders and chemicals used in the manufacturing of illicit drugs and pill press machine.

The pill press machine was capable of manufacturing around one thousand tablets per minute. This amount of illicit drugs has a combined estimated street value of more than \$1.2 million.

VIC: IRONSIDE SOUTH VALHALLA

Police executed warrants at two properties in Keysborough on 7 June 2021 and located a grow house with 30 plants, a platform device and more than \$17,000 in cash at the first and a further 22 plants at the second property. A 39-year-old man was arrested and charged

with drug cultivation and money laundering offences.

At an Aspendale Gardens property, more than \$300,000 worth of currency, five designer watches and a platform device were seized during a search warrant on 8 June 2021.



VIC: IRONSIDE SOUTH APOLLO

Operation Ironside SOUTH-APOLLO involved the mass disruption of the Comancheros Outlaw Motorcycle Gang (OMCGs) and affiliated Middle Eastern Organised Crime syndicate members in Victoria.

As a result of IRONSIDE intelligence, SOUTH-APOLLO is a significant coordinated joint law enforcement operation drawing upon unprecedented collaboration between the AFP and Victoria Police to combat serious and organised crime.

Police activity has seriously damaged and disrupted the Comancheros OMCG in Victoria and internationally, one of Australia's largest Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMCGs) and affiliated criminal syndicates.

The investigation has led to the arrest of more than 20 OMCG and affiliated Middle Eastern Organised Crime syndicate members in Victoria alone. Among the OMCG members are several from the club's hierarchy.

Operation IRONSIDE SOUTH-APOLLO has involved significant resources from the Victoria Police Echo Taskforce in the warrant and arrest activity, undertaken with assistance of officers from the AFP National Anti-Gangs Squad (NAGS).

This partnership has resulted in the disruption of the OMCG in both Australia and offshore. It involved the arrest of more than 20 OMCG and affiliated Middle Eastern Organised Crime members.

Around 18 search warrants were conducted on 7 June, 2021, while additional arrests have occurred as a result of IRONSIDE intelligence being passed to Victoria Police in the lead up to the IRONSIDE resolution activity.

During the search warrants encrypted devices, phones and more than \$200,000 in cash was seized.

OMCG members arrested will be charged with a string of offences ranging across drug, firearm, conspiracy to undertake serious assault and proceeds of crime offences.



Investigators executed a search warrant and allegedly located a loaded firearm concealed inside the range hood in the property's kitchen.

Operation IRONSIDE SOUTH-APOLLO, a joint operation involving IRONSIDE intelligence passed to Victoria Police from the AFP on 21 May, has resulted in the arrest of a known patched OMCG member following the alleged discovery of a concealed firearm at a Thomastown home.

Victoria Police ECHO Taskforce members, with assistance from NAGS Victoria, received information relating to possible weapons offences involving a known Comanchero OMCG member.

As a result of this intelligence, investigators executed a search warrant deploying AFP Geomatics and allegedly located a loaded firearm concealed inside the range hood in the property's kitchen.

Ammunition was also allegedly located inside the property and in the man's vehicle.

The 28-year-old man was arrested on firearm offences and plead guilty in the Melbourne Magistrates' Court. He was sentenced to 14 days imprisonment to be released on 7 June, 2021.

Operation IRONSIDE SOUTH-APOLLO, a major joint operation involving IRONSIDE intelligence passed to Victoria Police from AFP resulted in the disruption of an alleged cash drop involving more than \$250,000, believed to be the proceeds of crime.

Victoria Police received intelligence from AFP over an alleged planned cash money drop occurring in Melbourne on Thursday, 20 May, 2021.

As a result of this intelligence a 38-year-old male driver was stopped in Preston with his vehicle searched.

A search of the man's vehicle located two mobile phones, a shopping bag containing three vacuum sealed bags with a large sum of cash (believed to be \$250k) inside, along with an additional satchel containing an estimated \$5000 in cash.

The man was later charged with proceeds of crime offences and will face court again at a later date.

Operation IRONSIDE SOUTH-APOLLO, a joint operation involving IRONSIDE intelligence passed to Victoria Police from AFP, resulted in the disruption of more than 27 kilograms of illicit drugs allegedly being trafficked from New South Wales to Victoria.

IRONSIDE intelligence was passed to the Victoria Police Drug Task Force on 11 May, 2021 in relation to drug trafficking, outlining the possibility of a large quantity of border controlled drugs planned to be transported from New South Wales into Victoria on 12 May, 2021.

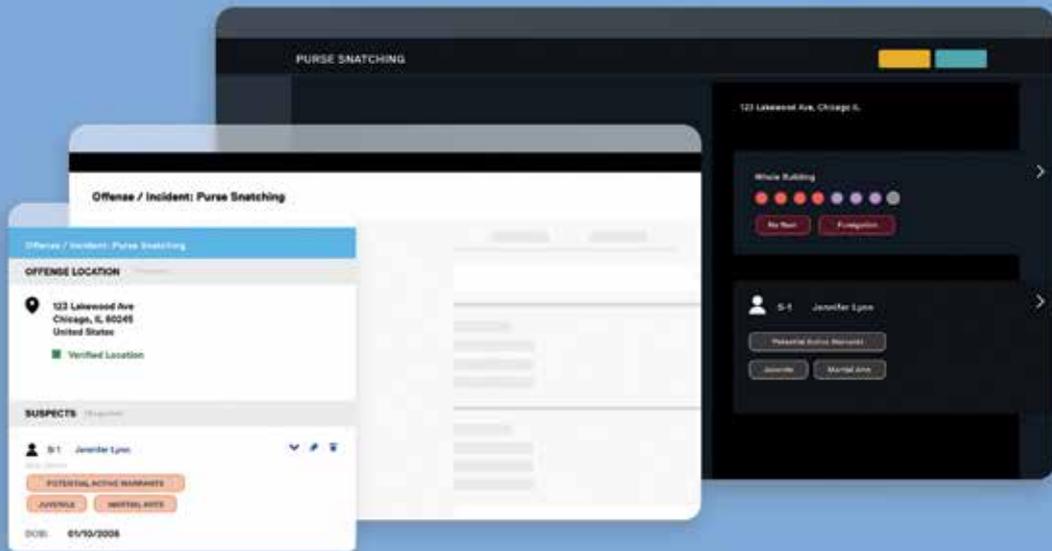
Victoria Police intercepted a vehicle travelling from New South Wales along the Hume Highway near Tallarook in Victoria on 12 May, 2021.

A large quantity of border controlled drugs were discovered inside the vehicle in duffle bags.

The bags contained approximately 25kgs of methamphetamine and 2kgs of cocaine.

Police seized the drugs and vehicle for further analysis.

Two men from Liverpool, New South Wales travelling in the vehicle were arrested and charged with drug trafficking offences.



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VIC: IRONSIDE SOUTH HERTFORSHIRE

Operation IRONSIDE intelligence shared with Victoria Police enabled investigators to undertake swift disruption activity on an alleged money laundering syndicate and seize approximately \$740,000 (believed to be the proceeds of crime). This activity led to the arrest of two alleged offenders in Melbourne on 5 May, 2021.

Police intercepted a vehicle in Brighton and it will be alleged that a shopping bag containing \$40,000 in cash was located. The driver of the vehicle, a 48-year-old man from Richmond, was arrested at the scene.

A 34-year-old woman, also from Richmond, was arrested after a search warrant at her residential property allegedly located a blue suitcase containing \$700,000 in cash.

The two accused have been charged with Victorian state proceeds of crime offences thanks to the disruption activity undertaken as a result of IRONSIDE intelligence and the joint efforts of the AFP and Victoria Police.



VIC: IRONSIDE SOUTH ANDIAMO

IRONSIDE SOUTH-ANDIAMO led to the dismantling of an Australian-based arm of a transnational organised crime syndicate including a high-priority target and alleged Australian ringleader of the criminal group in Melbourne.

This AFP-led investigation revealed an alleged Victorian criminal syndicate conspiring to import 1.6 tonnes of methamphetamine and cocaine from the USA and India between July and October 2021.

Seven people believed to be the entire alleged onshore criminal network,

were arrested in Melbourne as part of IRONSIDE SOUTH-ANDIAMO, including the suspected syndicate ringleader on Monday 7 June, 2021.

It is alleged the syndicate ringleader and main target, a 37-year-old Melbourne man, was responsible for allegedly coordinating and planning illicit drug imports to Australia.

As a result of IRONSIDE intelligence, AFP investigators arrested the entire onshore criminal syndicate, with seven alleged members taken into custody during search

warrants across Melbourne on Monday 7 June, 2021.

IRONSIDE intelligence has led to prevention of a 1.6 tonne international illicit drugs conspiracy and the complete dismantling of a sophisticated transnational criminal syndicate.

Thanks to this intelligence, top-tier ranking syndicate members are now in police custody.

Investigators believe without IRONSIDE insight, the syndicate ringleaders would otherwise appear invisible to law enforcement.



Operation Ironside

SOUTH AUSTRALIA



95

OFFENDERS CHARGED

184

OFFENCE COUNT #

994kg

DRUGS SEIZED

16

SEARCH WARRANTS

16

FIREARMS/WEAPONS SEIZED

\$556k

CASH SEIZED (AUD)



SA: IRONSIDE

COMANCHERO OMCG

Seizure of automatic weapons: firearms located in hidden compartments

As a result of intelligence emanating out of Operation IRONSIDE, the AFP provided information which led to the SAPOL seizure of several automatic weapons in early January 2020.

The weapons were seized from a vehicle alleged to be linked to the Comanchero OMCG and located within a highly sophisticated, hidden compartment.

This concealment would not have been identified and the dangerous automatic weapons seized without the AFP provided information



Items seized:

- 1 x Steyr 5.56 fully-automatic military rifle
- 1 x Colt AR15 5.56 semi-automatic rifle and scope
- 1 x Glock 9mm handgun
- 1 x Luger 9mm handgun
- 1 x Ruger 357 magnum revolver
- Magazines to suit the above weapons
- A quantity of .223 calibre ammunition
- A quantity of .45 calibre ammunition.



SA: IRONSIDE

OPERATION LEPANTO

SIX MEN CHARGED AFTER \$1.5M WORTH OF CANNABIS AND CASH SEIZED FROM ALLEGED SA REBELS BIKIE GANG SAFE HOUSE

As a result of information emanating out of Operation IRONSIDE, six men were charged with drug trafficking after the South Australia National Anti-Gangs Squad found more than 320 kilograms of dried cannabis and \$50,000 cash at a suburban Adelaide property in February 2021.

Police allege the Rebels Outlaw Motorcycle Gang has been using the Northfield residence as a so-called 'safe house' for drug activity.

SA NAGS, which consists of Australian Federal Police and South Australia Police, executed a search warrant at the property on 2 February 2021, with the support of SA Police STAR Group and Crime Gangs Taskforce officers.

They allegedly found the cash and large amounts of cannabis inside the house and allege the property was being used as a processing facility to package dried cannabis for distribution.

SA: IRONSIDE
REVOKE

As a result of intelligence emanating out of Operation IRONSIDE, The AFP referred information to South Australia Police which led to the identification of a significant clan lab in suburban Adelaide.

Police allege the clan lab was under the control of Comanchero OMCG members.

The large scale laboratory had the capability to produce significant quantities of methamphetamine. It was not operating at the time that it was located.

Between August and September 2020, seven men were charged with a range of offences – including taking part in the manufacture of a large commercial quantity of a controlled drug.

The investigation is ongoing and police have not ruled out further searches or arrests.



Operation Ironside WESTERN AUSTRALIA



30

OFFENDERS CHARGED

46

OFFENCE COUNT #

72kg

DRUGS SEIZED

43

SEARCH WARRANTS

31

FIREARMS/WEAPONS SEIZED

\$7.5m

CASH SEIZED (AUD)



Two electronic currency counters and cryovac sealing equipment were also seized, along with \$6.1 million predominantly \$100 and \$50 bills from a Girrawheen property in November 2020.

WA: IRONSIDE MAIDOS

As a result of Operation Ironside intelligence, AFP investigators identified a WA safe house where the proceeds of drug deals were being processed and stored for sending to the Eastern States.

AFP executed a search warrant at the Girrawheen property in November 2020, where they found almost \$6.2 million in cash.

One room in the home was believed to be used exclusively to count and package cash. Police seized two electronic currency counters and cryovac sealing equipment.

The cash found, predominantly \$100 and \$50 bills, was sealed in bags and stored inside thermal shopping bags that were then bubble wrapped. The bags were hidden in cardboard boxes among new clothing and polystyrene balls.

AFP investigators believe the cash was packaged in preparation for being sent to the Eastern States.

Two men, then aged 29 and 30, were arrested at the property and charged with dealing in the proceeds



of crime worth \$1 million or more, which carries a maximum penalty of 25 years' imprisonment.

They have since pleaded guilty and are expected to be sentenced on 27 July 2021.

AFP investigators believe the men played a crucial role in facilitating the transfer of proceeds of crime from multiple syndicates that had distributed drugs in WA.



AFP Western-Central Command Assistant Commissioner Chris Craner said seizing cash linked to illegal activities is a critical part of the AFP's strategy to smash organised crime.

"It takes the profit out of crime and prevents that money being used to fund future illegal activities, or enrich the lifestyles of those who prey upon and exploit our community," Assistant Commissioner Craner said.



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WA: IRONSIDE WESTERN

Alleged OMCG-linked drug & money laundering networks

The Australian Federal Police-led National Anti-Gangs Squad (NAGS) has prevented approximately 25 kilograms of illicit drugs from reaching the WA community and seized more than \$1.2 million in alleged criminal proceeds, after a crackdown on Outlaw Motorcycle Gang-linked drug distribution networks.

Operation IRONSIDE intelligence enabled police to identify people who were allegedly part of four separate networks supplying methamphetamine, MDMA and cocaine in WA or laundering criminal proceeds. The drugs were worth at least \$22 million in street level sales in WA. WA NAGS includes members of the AFP and WA Police Force.

WA NAGS seized \$996,165 from three people accused of being part of a syndicate laundering criminal proceeds on behalf of an offshore WA Outlaw Motorcycle Gang member.

Two women and a man have each been charged with possessing stolen or unlawfully obtained property after police allegedly intercepted a cash handover at a Perth business on 21 May 2021.

A 46-year-old man has been charged after WA NAGS found \$205,000 cash and 12 kilograms of methamphetamine, which police allege was going to be distributed on behalf of an Outlaw Motorcycle Gang.

The NSW man travelled to Perth in mid-April and was allegedly storing the illicit items at a Willetton property where he was staying.

On 17 May (2021), WA NAGS executed a search warrant at the property and allegedly found a tool box containing the meth hidden in the roof cavity and about \$205,000 in a bedroom.

The 46-year-old man is remanded in custody and is expected back in Perth Magistrate's Court on 15 June charged with possessing a trafficable quantity of methamphetamine with intent to sell or supply, and possessing stolen or unlawfully obtained property.

A 26-year-old woman was charged in April (2021) over allegations she was preparing to supply methamphetamine worth millions of dollars to the Rebels OMCG.



Intelligence from Operation Ironside enabled police to identify a 'dead drop' in the Perth hills where a criminal syndicate was allegedly hiding illicit drugs for collection.

WA NAGS found a bag containing three kilograms of meth – worth an estimated \$3 million in 'street deals' in WA – at the site and replaced it with a harmless substance.

On 29 April, officers arrested the woman soon after she allegedly dug up the bag and charged her with attempting to possess methamphetamine with intent to sell or supply.

She has been remanded in custody to appear in court again on 30 July.

WA NAGS charged a 27-year-old who allegedly worked as a drug 'courier' for the WA Comanchero Outlaw Motorcycle Gang after seizing almost 10 kilograms of illicit drugs.

It came after NAGS officers launched an investigation into an interstate drug trafficking syndicate allegedly linked to WA gang members.

The man was arrested on 12 May after he allegedly left a green bag containing 4.1 kilograms of meth in bushland in Gngangara.

WA NAGS then searched an Ellenbrook home and found approximately 1.5 kilograms of meth, 1.5 kilograms of cocaine and 2.45 kilograms of MDMA hidden under an oven.

The 27-year-old has been charged with four counts of possession of a trafficable amount of a prohibited drug with intent to sell or supply, contrary to section 6(1) of the *Misuse of Drugs Act 1981* (WA).

The maximum penalty for this offence is life imprisonment.



Protecting Australia beyond its traditional borders: apps and policing in the internet age

TEAGAN WESTENDORF

The success of Operation Ironside, led by the Australian Federal Police with a host of international partner agencies, hinged on the use of a messaging app thought by criminals to be encrypted. The numerous arrests and seizures announced last week show how globalised the business model of transnational and serious organised crime groups has become.

Digital sovereignty requires a democratic state to take a forward-looking approach to mitigating the various intersecting, compounding and increasing threats presented to it and its people by advances in digitisation and technological innovation.

Operation Ironside is a reminder that strategic policing sits at the forefront of this effort. Old threats like violent extremism, organised crime, child exploitation and adult sex crimes have exploded in new ways online. Terrorist attacks have been livestreamed, inspiring other extremist actors; criminal networks have become globalised; and online child abuse and revenge pornography have proliferated. This has happened through the incredible ease of connecting with likeminded individuals and amassing a real-time audience on social media platforms and websites, and the agility of business communications enabled by the internet of things that benefit illegal as much as legal enterprises.

Keeping up with the unprecedented volume and diversity of data-enabled

criminal activity has stretched the resources and capabilities of policing and intelligence agencies. In Australia, the push to respond more effectively to digitally exacerbated threats has led to calls for the parliament to provide policing and intelligence agencies with greater powers. Creating a legislative framework to police the new spaces created by the digital age is part of a proactive, strategic response to these threats.

This is not to say, however, that police powers should be increased without due process and debate.

There are two parts to this move. The first is increasing police tools to respond to online threats, both reactively to prosecute and proactively to frustrate and prevent criminal activities; the aim is to remove the conditions in which these threats flourish online. The second part is balancing the legislative powers given to intelligence and policing agencies with the protection of the civil liberties that are core to the democratic state.

This is not a mutually exclusive tussle. It is the same process democracies have always followed in the physical, offline world. And just because the parliament or the public can't easily decide which argument is more important doesn't mean there's a problem. Democracy is about enduring the ongoing debate and tension between different points of view; the alternative is the Chinese government's 'Skynet'.

To this end, four new bills have put to parliament since 2018 that seek to increase the powers of the AFP, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission and eSafety Commissioner to police and regulate online criminal activity. Only one, the Telecommunications and Other Legislation Amendment (Assistance and Access) Bill 2018 (TOLA), has been enacted so far. The other three, which are still before the parliament, are the Identify and Disrupt Bill 2020, the International Production Orders Bill 2020 and the Online Safety Bill 2021.

The spectacular success of Operation Ironside has prompted questions about whether Australia's policing and intelligence agencies really need greater powers to police the internet – especially given that the one bill that has passed (TOLA, which makes it mandatory for industry to decrypt and hand over encrypted data in some cases) doesn't appear to have been necessary because the app used in the operation was developed and cleverly dropped into criminals' hands by the AFP and the FBI.

The AFP has confirmed that TOLA was used in Operation Ironside, but declined to clarify how, or if it was the basis for the court order that enabled the beta test of the ANØM app in Australia. In response to a media enquiry from ASPI, the AFP said that Commonwealth legislation required it to withhold such details 'until these matters are lawfully disclosed in open court'.



The success of this operation is evidence of the AFP's capacity to engage in multilateral efforts to great effect. It has also demonstrated the AFP's ability to study and adapt to a threat that has grown into a resilient, globalised network of criminals and 'trusted insiders' (corrupt lawyers, accountants, airport and freight logistics staff).

But it all hinged on access to an app that criminals thought was encrypted. And organised crime groups will surely not fall for that twice.

If there's one thing we've learned from this bust, it's that these groups are not a bunch of unsophisticated thugs (though they definitely employ some). They are an innovative network of often ordinary people with a globalised business model and strategy that makes their profits and operations resilient to busts even this big. The profit margins for methamphetamine and heroin trafficked from Southeast Asia into Australia in 2019 were 82% and 83%, respectively, despite border seizures of 31% and 23%. These margins are so high that international businesses would be insulated from border seizures even if they doubled or tripled.

So, could the AFP have played such a key role in this multinational operation if Australia hadn't had the extra powers provided by TOLA? It won't be possible to definitively answer that question until we know how the act was used.

Australia actually has fewer policing powers on the international stage than some of our allies and partners. We are yet to legislate Magnitsky-style sanctions like our Five Eyes partners have, despite compelling evidence of their effectiveness as a targeted policing tool against transnational organised crime. And suggestions that the AFP's involvement was sought purely because it has a legal power to access encrypted data ignores the AFP's proven record in bilateral and multilateral operations to counter organised crime and child exploitation.

There is much room for debate on the intended positive and possible unintended negative effects of the remaining three bills to be passed. Those discussions need to be informed by sufficient parliamentary and public scrutiny, and industry consultation, to ensure maintenance of civil liberties and guard against unintended consequences. The legislation should not be rushed through parliament despite significant concerns, like TOLA was in late 2018.

The key for Australia is to take on this challenge without debating it as a zero-sum game between democracy and policing. There must also be full transparency in the upcoming Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security's review of how TOLA has been used so far (pending court cases permitting) and how it

would be used in a future instance like Operation Ironside with an industry app.

If AFP Commissioner Reece Kershaw and Prime Minister Scott Morrison are hoping to convince the parliament and the public that TOLA is justified and more bills are necessary, doing so by citing Operation Ironside as an example but not explaining how the bill was used in the operation won't be fair or effective.

Surely explaining that the next time the AFP wants to snoop on criminals' encrypted messages it won't have ANØM in play, and therefore would rely on the bill, would be a more effective strategy to gain public trust and encourage the debate required to get the remaining bills passed in a format that still protects our privacy.

In order for these efforts to be successful, the Australian people need to be brought along on the journey through transparent processes that ensure they understand how both sides of this debate are honoured. That's especially true in the post-Covid landscape where Australians have rediscovered how much we value our democratic freedoms.

Teagan Westendorf is an analyst in the strategic policing and law enforcement program and the Northern Australia Strategic Policy Centre at ASPI. Image: Olivier Morin/AFP/Getty Images.



Scott Morrison and AFP commissioner, Reece Kershaw, speak to the media during a press conference for Operation Ironside, which ensnared hundreds of people using compromised encrypted devices developed by an FBI informant. Photograph: Dean Lewins/AAP

Act giving AFP powers to monitor ANØM devices did not become law until after FBI operation began

Police say they used ‘appropriate legislative powers’ during Operation Ironside but a lawyer representing people charged says legal concerns remain.

NINO BUCCI

The Australian federal police have clarified the legal basis for a wide-ranging operation that ensnared hundreds of people using compromised encrypted devices developed by an FBI informant.

The ANØM devices were released in October 2018 by a convicted narcotics importer who was working for the FBI.

The FBI spent almost three years monitoring the content of messages sent using the platform with the assistance of the Australian federal police, until it was shut down on Tuesday and the infiltration was revealed.

AFP commissioner Reece Kershaw said at the time that the operation was legally authorised under the Telecommunications and Other Legislation Amendment (TOLA) Act, along with a legal authorisation from the FBI.

But the TOLA – which has been criticised for being too complex and providing extraordinary powers to law enforcement and intelligence bodies – did not come into law until two months after the first ANØM devices were released into Australia as part of an FBI “beta test” in October 2018.

An AFP spokesperson said on Thursday that the TOLA was among “a range of legislative provisions” used to facilitate the operation, codenamed Ironside.

“All warrants in Operation Ironside were issued by independent issuing authorities.

“There are provisions in commonwealth legislation which prevent the AFP from confirming the details of the legislative provisions relied upon until these matters are lawfully disclosed in open court. The AFP will elaborate further when it is appropriate and lawful to do so.”



The AFP added that it used “appropriate legislative powers to collect evidence of alleged serious criminal offending”, used a full-time, dedicated compliance coordinator and local compliance experts in every state, and engaged with the commonwealth ombudsman.

More than 12,000 devices were sold to criminal syndicates operating in about 100 countries who sent 27m messages before the network was shut down.

Seventeen people across the world have been charged in an FBI indictment, including Turkish citizen Hakan Ayik, who previously lived in Australia.

The men have been charged in the US with violating the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (Rico) Act and face a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison.

The AFP spokesperson was unable to clarify the status of Domenico Catanzariti, an Adelaide man who was taken into custody in the past week.

The FBI alleges Catanzariti was the only Australian-based administrator of the ANØM network in an indictment that was unsealed earlier this week.

But the AFP were unable to confirm where Catanzariti was being held, whether he had faced court, if he would be subject to criminal charges in Australia, or whether US authorities

More than 12,000 devices were sold to criminal syndicates operating in about 100 countries who sent 27m messages before the network was shut down.

had requested his extradition. The FBI and the Australian attorney general, Michaelia Cash, were contacted for comment.

Relatives and colleagues of Catanzariti who were contacted by Guardian Australia either did not respond or declined to comment. It is unclear who is acting as Catanzariti’s lawyer.

Craig Caldicott, the South Australia law society criminal law committee chair, is representing several people charged after evidence was gathered about their alleged offending under Operation Ironside.

He said he remained concerned about the legal basis for each individual case, despite the assurances of the AFP.

These concerns include whether a warrant for each of the more than 1,600 ANØM devices in Australia was authorised by an officer ranked as a

superintendent or above, as Caldicott believes is required.

An FBI informant providing devices that handed intelligence to the AFP that was then used for arrests and charges by state police presented a series of potential jurisdictional issues, Caldicott said.

He also believes that some of the issues in a successful 1995 high court appeal brought by John Anthony Ridgeway, who had been convicted of trafficking heroin after an AFP operation, could apply to those charged under Ironside.

In that case, the court found that the unlawful conduct of AFP officers prior to the alleged trafficking meant the conviction should be quashed.

“The AFP have got a major problem I think and haven’t realised it yet,” he said. “There’s going to be all sorts of issues over who was responsible for what.”



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Operation Ironside and ANØM

The AFP would sure want to have their ducks in a row.

BY PETER WOODHOUSE

A lot of people were stunned, a lot of people got arrested and there was a lot of chest thumping and back-patting going on earlier this month when the AFP revealed the remarkable details of Operation Ironside.

This all came to light as hundreds of search warrants were executed around Australia, resulting in more than 220 people being arrested and charged and the seizure of 72 weapons, more than 3 tonnes of drugs and \$45 million in cash. It has been labelled the 'sting of the century'.

The operation involved the AFP, in collaboration with the FBI and other authorities, building in a 'back-door' to encrypted communications software the FBI had apparently purchased from a convicted hacker in the US who had done a deal with American authorities to get a reduced sentence. That person was apparently paid around \$180,000 USD for their trouble.

Once the 'back door' was inserted into the software it was uploaded onto Google Android devices that had been stripped of other capabilities. Authorities then covertly encouraged international criminals to use the devices, spruiking their benefit and security. The devices were increasingly traded on the black market. Overtime the devices gained popularity amongst colourful characters allegedly involved in questionable activities across many countries. At the time of the recent raids, it was asserted that ANØM was being used by more than 11,000 people world-wide, including 1,650 people in Australia. Around the world, more than 800 arrests have now been made.

Over a period of three years, the AFP were monitoring the Trojan horse application, intercepting in excess of 25 million messages.

Two questions that remain to be answered are:

1. Were the authorities acting lawfully when they intercepted these messages; and
2. If not, will the evidence be inadmissible?



US authorities appear to have conceded from the outset that the messages could not be legally intercepted in America, relying on servers in other countries, including Australia, to capture the data and then pass on relevant communications to US authorities. That ultimately may not help them overcome that problem.

It is a different story in Australia. Telecommunications correspondence can be, and often is, lawfully intercepted with a warrant granted by a court or tribunal. Such a warrant is granted in respect of a particular telecommunications service or a particular person. However, as these devices do not otherwise use the telecommunications network (in the way that a normal mobile telephone would) and the authorities appear not to have known the identities of the ANØM users at the outset, it is unlikely these warrants were used or used properly.

There are other legislative provisions that allow police officers to conduct covert investigations, subject to approval of senior members of the police force, a court or tribunal. An authority for such an investigation would require the identities of at least some of the players to be known from the outset. Again, it seems unlikely these authorities were used or used properly.

If it is the case that these messages have been intercepted unlawfully or improperly they are, as a starting point, inadmissible. That is not the end of it, however.

A court can admit unlawfully or improperly obtained evidence if satisfied that the desirability of admitting that

evidence outweighs the undesirability of admitting evidence that was obtained unlawfully or improperly.

There are a number of factors a court is obliged to consider when conducting this balancing exercise including the importance of the evidence in the proceeding, the gravity or the impropriety and whether it was deliberate.

Whilst there are still a lot of unknowns about this investigation, what we do know is that the AFP are notoriously bad at following the law when it comes to the interception of data.

Only 2 months ago, the Commonwealth Ombudsman released a scathing report on the AFP's access to metadata. The report found that the AFP had unlawfully accessed metadata on more than 1,700 occasions between 2015 and 2019.

The AFP would want to hope that they have all their legal ducks in a row when it comes to the legality of their actions in intercepting many millions of private messages.

It would be mighty embarrassing if it turned out that substantial parts of the operation were carried out unlawfully and the admissibility of the evidence was called into question.

It remains to be seen whether the messages transmitted via ANØM were lawfully intercepted. What is patent though is a lot of people have been charged out of this operation and a lot of good criminal defence lawyers will be scouring over material, giving it a lot of attention. It may only take one successful challenge to the interception of this material for the rest of the dominoes to fall.



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The 13th Academic Symposium of Tasmanian Chinese Buddhist Academy of Australia was held virtually via Zoom on Saturday 19 June 2021.

More than 300 attendees worldwide attended and discussed some of the 80+ theses which have submitted to the Academy.

Dignitaries in attendance included the Hon. Elise Archer MP, Ms. Kristie Johnston MP, Most Ven. Mugunuwela Anuruddha Mahathero from Sri Lanka, high monks and Buddhist scholars from around the world, giving the audience a great insight into furthering the Buddhist ideology of peace and wise contemplation.

The diverse topics range from modern application of traditional teachings and esoteric Buddhist practices, to Buddhist philosophical interpretation of the coronavirus pandemic.

13th ACADEMIC SYMPOSIUM

