

Police have Queensland's major airports covered

By Michelle Connolly,
Media and Public Affairs Branch



Brisbane, Gold Coast and Cairns are eagerly awaiting the arrival of trained Queensland Police Service (QPS) officers to complement the effective police presence currently at the city's airports

From July this year a number of QPS officers are expected to start training for work at one of the three airports.

Police Aviation Liaison Officer Stephen Moore, Aviation Australian Federal Police (AFP) said he expected more than 100 QPS officers to be based at one of the three airports from 2008.

"It is expected that 113 members of the QPS will be deployed in the first 12 months to the Airport Uniform Policing model," Federal Agent Moore said.

He said the need for state police officers based at airports arose following a review by the Federal Government of aviation security in Australia after September 11 and the Bali bombings. This included a review by Sir John Wheeler who had earlier conducted a comprehensive investigation of police practices at Heathrow Airport in London.

"The findings of the Australian review identified a number of issues including a disjointed approach to national airport security with a plethora of agencies responding to issues at airports," he said.

The airport contingent, which was part of the review, is known as Aviation Brisbane and is the Queensland hub for three designated airports including the Gold Coast and Cairns.

"What signifies these three Queensland Airports apart from others in Queensland is their size, the existence of international flights and the presence of uniformed Counter Terrorism First Response (CTFR) officers, who are the first responders to all airport incidents," Federal Agent Moore said.

Aviation Brisbane formally commenced on January 16, 2006 with the appointment of Airport Police Commander Steve Grant.

Federal Agent Moore said Commander Grant was responsible for the policing at all three airports, however Gold Coast and Cairns airports had their own commanders holding the rank of coordinator/superintendent within the AFP.

"The duties at the airport are wide and varied and on a daily basis there is training, attendance at a range of formal and informal meetings with aviation stakeholders and partners, investigation of complex and routine matters and response to a number of aviation incidents," he said.

"Brisbane Airport is not just an airport within the city but an airport city.

"It caters for 470 international airlines and 2,280 domestic movements every week and has 8,000 staff working for 130 businesses.

"Last year there were 17.8 million passenger movements expected to increase to 35 million over 20 years and as a result the airport needs a strong and effective police presence.

"The Federal Government presented a report to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) – and premiers from every state and territory agreed to adopt the model – which would see airport security become a dedicated stream within the AFP, closely supported by state police teams," Federal Agent Moore said.

"To that end some state police have already completed training and are now fully integrated into the Airport Unified Policing Models in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. New South Wales and the Northern Territory are scheduled to be on line within the next two months and Queensland will follow in July 2007."

Federal Agent Moore said the need for a police presence at airports was evident with 170 CTFR incidents reported at Brisbane airport between January 1 and February 28 this year.

"Many of these incidents required police attendance," Federal Agent Moore said.

"The incidents included alleged assaults, bomb threats or hoax threats made by passengers, response to screening points duress alarms where prohibited items or weapons are seized and attendance to issues involving members of the public."

Additionally a significant number of calls are received by airport Customs daily which require police attendance.

These are mainly concerns involving arriving or departing

passengers who are on Family Law alerts, bankruptcy alerts, state police warrants, or detail the movement of narcotics couriers or require police attendance to evaluate and then process internal suspect couriers.

"Drug couriers are automatically referred to police and this year two Customs officers have been assaulted at the airport," Federal Agent Moore said.

He said the AFP maintained an office 24 hours a day, seven days a week at Brisbane Airport, approximately 800 meters from the international terminal.

Staff employed as part of Aviation Brisbane includes 72 CTFR members incorporating Bomb Appraisal Officers, Federal Explosive Detector Dog Teams, shift supervisors, members performing patrols and undertaking Combined Operation Groups (COG) duties in the terminals.

There are three Police Aviation Liaison Officers; 10 members attached to the Joint Airport Investigation Team, which includes two serving QPS plain-clothes members and two Customs investigators.

Six members are attached to the Joint Airport Intelligence Group (JAIG), which again includes one QPS intelligence officer and two Customs intelligence officers/analysts, a four-member aviation training team and five support staff. ■