

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

Question No. 56

Senator Singh asked the following question at the hearing on 24 February 2014:

Senator SINGH: Are you involved with Operation Polaris?

Mr Negus: We are, yes.

Senator SINGH: Is there an operating budget for the Polaris task force?

Mr Negus: Yes there is. The Polaris task force of course is a joint operation between the AFP and New South Wales police, with some representation from the Australian Crime Commission, the New South Wales Crime Commission as well, and of course Customs.

Senator SINGH: Have container check ratios increased under Operation Polaris?

Mr Negus: The standard checking of containers is really a matter for Customs, but I can say that they have managed to gather significant intelligence across a whole range of issues on the waterfront. They have been very successful in arresting a range of people and seizing a range of illicit goods, including tobacco coming in in containers. I think 11 tonnes was one of the seizures that they had last year. They have been very successful but the container checks themselves are really a standard issue for Customs, but they would act on the intelligence that is provided by the Polaris task force.

Senator SINGH: So who are the main partners to the AFP in Operation Polaris. There is New South Wales—

Mr Negus: Mainly the New South Wales police and Customs, and there is smaller representation from both the New South Wales Crime Commission, who has one person, and the Australian Crime Commission, who I think has one person as well.

Senator SINGH: You were providing me with an operating budget.

Mr Negus: I think we will have to take that on notice. We do not have the operating budget here for that particular task force but we would certainly have that available. In fact we will try to get that this evening if we can before we finish.

...

Senator SINGH: I also have a similar question for the Trident task force.

Mr Negus: I will get Deputy Commissioner Phelan to talk about it because, again, Trident and Jericho, which is in Brisbane, are the spin-offs from Polaris—because it has been so successful we introduced it in Melbourne and Brisbane respectively. I will get the Deputy Commissioner to give you a few points on that and we will see if we can get the budgets.

Mr Phelan: Similar to Polaris, the relationship down there is a joint task force with obviously the Victoria Police, the Australian Crime Commission and also the Australian Customs Service down there, working out of the Customs building. There have been multiple successes across a number of crime types, and it is really due to the sharing of intelligence across each of those agencies as well. That follows the full gamut of working down the port, whether it be narcotics trafficking, also working in closely with the Victoria Police's other task forces, particularly Taskforce Echo in relation to outlaw motorcycle gangs and also targeting the tobacco industry as well—so the full gamut of that which runs the port. In terms of the budget for that, we can get that for you; we will have to take it on notice. But the budgets for Trident, Polaris and Jericho, whilst discrete in those particular geographical locations, all fit within the serious and organised crime budget, so we should be able to get that breakdown for you relatively easily.

Senator SINGH: That would be great. If you could take that on notice, that would be very good. ...

The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

	2013-14 operating budgets	2013-14 staff
	<i>(employees, supplier and capital)</i>	<i>FTE</i>
Polaris (NSW)	\$2.1m	15.1
Jericho (QLD)	\$1.0m	7.1
Trident (VIC)	\$1.3m	9.1

The answer provided reflects AFP operating costs and staff only, and does not represent the cost of other participating Commonwealth agencies or state jurisdictions.