

RECD: 30.6.06

FROM: Customs

PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE AUSTRALIAN CRIME COMMISSION  
INQUIRY INTO AMPHETAMINES AND OTHER SYNTHETIC DRUGS

AUTHORISED FOR PUBLICATION

AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 1

Senator LUDWIG asked the following question at the hearing on 5 June 2006:

Where are the overseas offices based? Are they based more in locations for trade facilitation-or, in other words, where Customs works in trade facilitation roles? Or are they more likely to be where there are border integrity/security issues?

The answer to the honourable senator's question as follows:

Australian Customs maintains offices at the Australian Embassies in Bangkok, Beijing, Brussels, Jakarta, Tokyo and Washington.

The functions of the overseas offices cover the broad range of Customs' activities from trade facilitation to border integrity and security related issues. Posts in Bangkok, Brussels and Washington undertake work particularly related to illicit drugs and their interdiction. As well, there is a strong focus on regional border security and counter terrorism activities through the Jakarta post.

Other activities include addressing trade pressures (particularly in China), with an emphasis on anti-dumping measures. A key function of all posts is the enhancement of relationships with other Customs administrations and associated departments. This includes sharing intelligence in matters of mutual assistance, and where appropriate facilitating capacity building initiatives.

Cleared by NM Law Enforcement Strategy and Security Branch  
29 June 2006

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Question No. 2

Senator RICHARDSON asked the following question at the hearing on 5 June 2006:

Could you take it on notice to indicate over the past 12 months the types of requests and the types of responses you have provided, as diverse as assistance with dogs, control operations or those ones that you can at least advise us of?

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

Over the past twelve months, Australian Customs has received requests for assistance from a range of external agencies, including: Australian Federal Police, Australian Crime Commission, all State and Territory Police services, State Corrections services, Defence Forces and several overseas Customs agencies.

The type of responses provided by Australian Customs includes:

- Detector dog support and training for explosives, firearms and narcotics;
- Joint and controlled operations and investigations in relation to narcotics, precursor chemicals, and other drugs used in the manufacture of amphetamines. The nature of the assistance has also included both search and computer forensics assistance during warrant execution and acceptance of investigation referrals; and
- Intelligence support in relation to the provision of information about persons or matters of interest, border movements, and corroborative information (for example, about known associates). Intelligence support that requires the sharing of information is governed by established Memorandum of Understanding and strict protocols.

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Question No. 3

**Senator LUDWIG asked the following question at the hearing on 5 June 2006:**

Is the Australian Taxation Office able to access it? Please take on notice to provide who has access to it and how you manage the access regime.

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

The Australian Taxation Office does not have access to the National Intelligence System.

There are only three other agencies which have access:

- Australian Federal Police,
- Australian Transactions Reports Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC), and
- Australian Crime Commission.

These three agencies have separate Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) with the Australian Customs Service that allow and govern the terms of their access. Within these MOU, access is managed by a specific area in Customs that accepts and processes applications by, and seeks approval for, specific officers from those agencies. An access register is maintained and accesses are periodically reviewed.

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Question No. 4

Senator MACDONALD asked the following question at the hearing on 5 June 2006:

Of the interdictions you make, do most of them involve people or do they involve containers or some other form of packing?

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

The detection figures for the full calendar year 2005 are as follows:

Customs drug detections (all drugs)	
Total	4035
Importation directly involving people (air passengers (237) and sea crew (2))	239.
Post	3580
Sea Cargo (ie containerised)	12
Air cargo	204

These are total figures for all drug detections. It should be noted that Postal detections tend to be of small quantities (often of prohibited quantities of cold/flu tablets and dietary supplements).

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