



Retired Australian Reserve soldiers lead American, British, and Canadian Reserve military police Soldiers to the Governor's House.

Reserve Military Police Soldiers Visit Australia

By Staff Sergeant Nate Orme

A contingent of U.S. Army Reserve military police Soldiers were in Australia earlier this year to participate in parades, ceremonies, and joint training as guests of their Aussie counterparts in association with Australia's Reserve Forces Day celebrations. Between events, the U.S. military police Soldiers learned that Australian soldiers are nicknamed "Diggers," that "bloke" is a widely used slang word for a man but that "Sheila" is rarely used to describe a woman anymore, that the expression "crikey" is about as hip as "groovy," and that "Coy" is the abbreviation for "Company."

Reserve Forces Day has been observed since 1997, when it was created by retired Australian reservists with the help of the government. American service members first attended the annual event in 2001. This year, military police Soldiers from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada were invited to observe the 90th anniversary of the Royal Australian Corps of Military Police. Members of the 415th Military Police Detachment from St. Louis, Missouri, comprised 23 of the 27 U.S. military police Soldiers invited. The detachment had previously won the Reserve Officers Association 2006 unit of the year award in the detachment-size category, mostly because of its service in Iraq. The 306th Military Police Battalion from New York and the 339th Military Police Company from Iowa also sent two Soldiers each to Australia.

While in Australia, the visiting military police Soldiers met the governor of New South Wales, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, not once but twice. The first meeting was to welcome the military police Soldiers to Australia at the elegant Governor's House on 25 June. The second meeting was at the Parliament House on 2 July after the Reserve Forces Day parade in downtown Sydney. In between meetings with the governor, the military police Soldiers joined in several ceremonial and training events.

On 27 June, the military police Soldiers participated in a ceremony at the Australian War Memorial in the nation's capital, Canberra. Soldiers from each participating nation laid wreaths in the magnificent Hall of Memory that shelters Australia's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

"It was a privilege to do something to honor another country's fallen comrades. It was very special. It was also fortunate to get to see another country's capital," said Master Sergeant Bill Saccente, 415th Military Police Detachment.

On 28 June, the group visited Lamia Barracks, home to the Defence Police Training Centre, in the Sydney suburb of Holsworthy. Australian Army Major David McGarry, chief instructor for training, said the center teaches 32 different courses. Each nation's representative



New South Wales Governor Marie Bashir greets visiting American military police Soldiers just before the Reserve Forces Day Parade in Sydney, Australia.

gave a lecture on military police training issues and practices, including lessons learned by those who had deployed to Iraq. Part of the day involved touring facilities at the center, including a new forensics lab and a detainee corrective facility.

“It surprised me that the detainee facility is used for training as well. It’s definitely different. Corrective training is not used a lot in America anymore [in the military penal system],” said Specialist Valerie Bleckman of the 415th Military Police Detachment. She has been attending college to become a paramedic since she returned from Iraq. Since many of the U.S. military police Soldiers are also police officers as civilians, they visited the New South Wales Police College at Goulburn for a brief tour. Another trip took the U.S. military police Soldiers to an Australian reserve infantry unit that was conducting a night drill. The Diggers talked about their training and equipment, and afterward all the Soldiers talked about the differences and similarities between the nations present.

“It’s fascinating to see how the Australian Army operates. There are some differences, but for the most part it’s very similar to the U.S. [Army]. The challenges are the same in recruiting and retention,” said Major Robert Berry of the 306th Military Police Battalion. He was echoed by his Australian counterpart.

“There’s no panacea to recruiting. You’ve got to do the boring bits before you train,” said Major Ian Hendry-Adams.

Rounding out the trip were marches in Reserve Forces Day parades in the coastal city of Newcastle on 1 July followed the next day by a parade through downtown Sydney. Luckily, the event is celebrated on different days

in different cities. Hundreds of current and former Australian reservists, some who served as far back as World War II, marched in the parades. Many of the older reservists, known as “Nashos,” served in the draft force that existed from 1951 to 1972. Today’s Australian military is a volunteer force. Adding to the atmosphere, several vintage military vehicles were driven in the parade and many of the participants, including a bagpipe troupe, wore traditional kilts.

In Sydney, Governor Bashir greeted the U.S. military police Soldiers before the parade and saluted them as they passed in front of her dais. Along with the Governor stood Australian hero and Victoria Cross recipient Keith Payne. Payne is the most decorated living Australian and is listed in the Hall of Heroes at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, for his joint service with the United States in Vietnam, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and Silver Star. After the parade, Payne spoke to the U.S. military police Soldiers at a private reception at Parliament House.

Lieutenant Colonel Irene Glaeser, coordinator with the U.S. Army Reserve Command and a military police Soldier as well, thanked the Australians. “I’ve never seen so many veterans on parade. You really do it right. There is no way we can beat the Australian hospitality,” she said.