THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

REPORT by:

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THE DONALD MACKAY CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP

STUDY PROJECT:

- Current world trends in illicit drug manufacturing
- Law enforcement initiatives in the detection of clandestine drug laboratories
- Clandestine drug laboratory safety and dismantling procedures
- Chemical diversion procedures.

Paul Steel wearing personal protective equipment as used in a clandestine drug laboratory site.
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As the proliferation of clandestine drug laboratories in our community increase, so do the dangers to innocent members of the public and Police officers alike. Far from being the victimless crime that some people purport it to be, the manufacture of illicit drugs has wide reaching implications for society as a whole. In fact the dangerous toxic and hazardous nature of these laboratories is far more serious than most people are aware. For every gram of methamphetamine manufactured there are 6 grams of toxic waste created. So what happens to this toxic waste? The best-case scenario is that it destroys the soil and leeches into our ground water system without too much of an environmental impact. More often however, this waste is dumped where our children can stumble across it, left in hotel rooms or rental premises to contaminate the next occupant or illegally dumped where potentially it can become a chemical time bomb.

The hazardous nature of the processes and the chemicals involved in the manufacture of prohibited drugs are of extreme concern. A range of initiatives is being implemented to try and prevent the supply of these precursor materials. However, the huge profits involved in this endeavour force the criminal element involved to circumvent these strategies and resource the required ingredients by other means. Similarly, a large number of the items needed to manufacture prohibited drugs are readily accessible from a pharmacy or hardware store. The restriction of many of these items is not feasible. Information readily available from the Internet and other underground publications demonstrates how criminals can achieve the required chemical reaction, themselves. This is a further process that creates more toxic waste, increases the potential of explosion and is another hazard for anyone who stumbles across it. Western Australia has been unfortunate enough to have experienced people being seriously injured whilst processing clandestine drug laboratories.

The USA as a whole has a clandestine laboratory epidemic with over 8000 drug laboratories seized per year. By undertaking training with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) I was able to compare their level of instruction with that given in Western Australia. Similarly by working with 5 different clandestine drug laboratory law enforcement bodies I was able to research the safety procedures adopted, the proactive investigative initiatives utilised and the specific chemical diversion procedures employed. I found that the training is standardized across the USA by the DEA however, the interpretation and implementation of those training procedures varied notably between agencies. I also discovered that a wide range of proactive law enforcement initiatives had been implemented to target specific local issues. Some States had been more successful than others in reducing the level of clandestine drug laboratories operating.

Due to the sheer volume of information obtained I only intend to highlight those strategies that have been successful. Some of these may have been adopted by more than one of the agencies I visited, but will only be discussed once throughout this report.
This Fellowship Report details information in relation to clandestine drug laboratories. As this will become a published document it is not my intention to outline publicly initiatives and techniques that may subsequently be employed by Australian Law Enforcement personnel. Where appropriate, I have summarized those procedures employed by International authorities. Many of these are not directly relevant to Australia due to different laws and operating parameters. Similarly, due to the nature of the content, I have omitted specific information relating to different manufacturing methods. Instead I will refer to these methods in general terms.

I would like to thank and acknowledge the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust and in particular the Combined Services Club of Griffith (Patrons of the Donald MacKay Churchill Fellowship) for this opportunity, funding and their assistance to conduct this research.

I would also like to thank the following persons and organisations for their support:

- Special Agents Gene Sughimoto and Roy Pubal of the DEA, Canberra Country Office, American Embassy for co-ordinating my DEA visits in the USA.
- Detective Superintendent Ferdinand Gere and Detective Senior Sergeant Jim Cave of the Western Australia Police Service for supporting my application for a Churchill Fellowship.
- Unit Chief Dan Salter and all of the training staff at the DEA clandestine laboratory training unit, Quantico, Virginia.
- Irene Armstrong, Program Officer, International Visitor Program, DEA office of International Operations.
- Detective John Wall and the St Louis County Police Department
- Special Agent Patrick Waymire and the Iowa Division of Narcotics Enforcement.
- Sergeant Don Sherrard and the Phoenix Police Department Drug Enforcement Bureau.
- Group Supervisor Benny Stafford and the San Diego Drug Enforcement Administration.
- Group Supervisor Rick Wammack and the Riverside Drug Enforcement Administration.
- My wife Leisa, my son Samuel and our extended family without whose support and encouragement I would not have been able to undertake such an extensive study.
Executive Summary

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Project Description

To study:

- Current world trends in illicit drug manufacturing
- Law enforcement initiatives in the detection of clandestine drug laboratories
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- Chemical diversion procedures.

Highlights

1. Drug Enforcement Administration – Quantico, Virginia
   ➢ DEA State and Local Clandestine Drug Laboratory Certification Course
   ➢ DEA Tactical Entry to Clandestine Drug Laboratories Course

2. Drug Enforcement Administration Headquarters – Washington D.C.

3. St Louis County Police Department - St Louis, Missouri.

4. Iowa Division of Narcotics Enforcement – Des Moines, Iowa.

5. Phoenix Police Department Drug Enforcement Bureau – Phoenix, Arizona

6. San Diego Drug Enforcement Administration – San Diego California

7. Riverside Drug Enforcement Administration – Riverside California
Programme

March 31 – April 4, 2003

Quantico Virginia – DEA Clandestine Laboratory Enforcement Team Training Unit

➢ State and Local Clandestine Drug Laboratory Certification Course (SALC170)

April 7 – April 11, 2003

Quantico Virginia – DEA Clandestine Laboratory Enforcement Team Training Unit

➢ Tactical Entry to Clandestine Drug Laboratories Course (TAC21)

April 14 – April 15, 2003

Washington D.C. – Drug Enforcement Administration Head Quarters.

➢ Overview of DEA’s Organisational Structure
➢ Overview of DEA’s Mission and its application to international issues
➢ Hazardous Waste Disposal
➢ Domestic and International Chemical Control
➢ Clandestine Drug Laboratories
➢ Narco-Terrorism
➢ DEA Museum – history of drug trafficking

April 15 – April 23, 2003

St Louis Missouri, St Louis County Police Department.

April 23 – May 1, 2003

Des Moines Iowa, Iowa Division of Narcotics Enforcement.

May 1 – May 11, 2003

Phoenix Arizona, Phoenix Police Department Drug Enforcement Bureau

May 11 – May 17, 2003

San Diego California, San Diego Drug Enforcement Administration

May 17 – May 26, 2003

Riverside California, Riverside District Office of the Drug Enforcement Administration