

My scholarship journey started in early 2023 when I applied for the award. I have always had an interest in new technologies and how we can integrate them into policing. In December 2023 when I was casually reading the December issue of the IPA Police Down under magazine at Belconnen Police Station in the ACT, while heating up my dinner, with excitement I read on page 15 I was one of the two successful Australian applicants for the Arthur Troop Scholarship 2024. Within a week I had confirmed that I had been awarded and my next task was organising what would be one of the most memorable adventures of my life thus far. I was fortunate to have a study topic and course already decided. My scholarship application identified a clear topic of interest being the use of drones in policing, fortunate for me IBZ Gimborn holds a seminar on that very topic. My next task was fitting as many IPA opportunities as possible into a three-week trek through northern Germany. I eventually decided on an itinerary of Berlin, Hamburg, Dusseldorf, Gimborn (course), Koblenz and Frankfurt.

BERLIN

My time in Berlin started late in the evening of the 23rd having travelled for the 30 hours previous I was ready for some deserved sleep (not in an airplane chair). The following day I literally 'hit the ground running'. I booked a walking tour of Berlin in an attempt to see as much as I could of the city in the short time I had. Breakfast that morning would ignite a love affair with the German Backerei, something my belt line would not be pleased with by the end of the trip. As a history buff the energy and constant state of change in Berlin always interest me, to see the city and be there was something I had wanted for a long time. I was fortunate to visit sites such as: Checkpoint Charlie, the remnants of the wall at the Topography of Terror, the holocaust memorial and the beautiful buildings that populate museum island.





Image – Berlin sights and the wall

In the afternoon I booked a tour of the BMW Motorrad Factory, where all BMW motorbikes are born. Being an avid bike rider and a BMW rider, I felt this was almost a pilgrimage when visiting Berlin. The factory was excellent, an amazing experience seeing the finest in German engineering, no Police motorbikes but still a worthwhile experience. I spent the evening finding a traditional German restaurant to meet my craving for a pork knuckle and sauerkraut.



IMAGE – BMW Factory

On 25 September I organised for the first of many connections with our German IPA friends. Manuel from the 2nd Technical Unit of the Berlin Police picked me up for a day with the Berlin Riot Squad, as a public order officer in Canberra I was keen to see how our German friends operated. On arrival at

their Headquarters, which is in a 1930's Luftwaffe barracks, I was fortunate to meet with the battalion's leadership and see their beautiful historic headquarters. The battalions' offices were like something out of a movie, intentionally hidden deep in the forest, buildings still covered in now historically protected camouflage paint.



Image – Battalion headquarters buildings

At the Battalion I was fortunate to meet with the Air Team and inspect some of their drones and their counter drone equipment. It was great to speak with their members about the benefits and challenges our agencies face, even on the other side of the world, like most elements of the policing vocation they are the same. I then meet with members of the 2nd Technical Unit who took me on a detailed tour of the equipment the unit deploys, such as their Water Canon, Barricade Busters, Armoured Rescue and the trusty Mercedes Sprinter Riot Response Vehicles. The Water Cannon was especially impressive and the tactics it operates with were of value.





IMAGE – Water Cannon, Survivor, Buster and Sprinter

After some lunch with the unit's members, some discussions on tactics and the mandatory patch swapping it was time for me to go. Manuel and the Riot Battalion were welcoming and gave me an

insight into how a well-established and experienced Riot Squad operates in the current protest climate; the insights I can bring home will be of value to our team in Canberra as it develops.

On 26 September, it was time for me to pack up and say goodbye to Berlin. I spent the morning revisiting some sites I missed, I wanted to see the Reichstag and revisit some of the locations I didn't get to see in detail on the walking tour, such as the Government quarter and Checkpoint Charlie. After lunch I bid goodbye to Berlin and took the fast train to Hamburg.

HAMBURG

On arriving in Hamburg, I was meet at the Hauptbahnhof by Jorn and Sibel from IPA Hamburg. After a meet and greet Sibel and Tyron took me on a ride along around their patrol area which covers the central area of Hamburg and the train stations, I saw firsthand the issues with drugs, alcohol and crime, like any major city, community policing is at its core the same and it brings a sense of comfort and solace to see the same challenges faced at home. Later that evening I meet with fellow IPA members for dinner. Jorn organised a traditional German dinner with meat and beer and some great company in the form of the Hamburg IPA chapter. The dinner was filled with stories from work, the differences in our agencies and our IPA experiences abroad.



Image: Sibel and Jorn at the train station and dinner with IPA friends

On 27 September, Jorn met me early in the day to go see the Bundapolizei Bomb Disposal Unit at Hamburg International Airport. The IPA Team in Hamburg arranged for me to spend the morning with the unit, like the Riot Squad in Berlin I was particularly looking forward to this experience as a Bomb Technician in Canberra. To my enjoyment walking into the Bomb Squads hanger was like walking into our officers at home, it was a warm and inviting place full of robots, training equipment and memorabilia. Christian, Kay and Paul showed me their equipment and as a recruit course was also running, I was given a tour of their equipment by one of the new recruits under the close observation of the team. It was humbling to see the same bonds and dedication to the specialisation across nations and jurisdictions. After a couple coffees, some patch swapping and the presentation of a plaque Jorn and I left the airport for a walking tour of the city.

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Image: Hamburg Airport with police and the robots

The remainder of the day Jorn showed me the sights of Hamburg; the impressive port where we had lunch and spoke with some retired bankers, the remaining air raid tower from WW2 and some of the police divisions such as the famous Davidache in the night district. Later that afternoon I met with Sibel for her teams' socialising day where I spent the afternoon with some of Hamburg's finest. On 28 September I left Hamburg for Dusseldorf, like Berlin the visit was too short, but I met some great new friends, I saw lots of historic/ epic city sites, next stop was Dusseldorf.





Image: Hamburg city tour and Jorn

I had nothing organised in Dusseldorf, so I undertook a relaxing walk around the city looking at cities and enjoying more fine baked goods, meats and beers. The following morning, I explored the Rhine streets and shops before being picked up by the IPA driver for my trip to Gimborn. I meet with the driver at the train station for a short drive to Gimborn. On arrival it was late and dark but fortunately my room was easy to find and so was the Turmbar where I meet with some of my Gimborn colleagues from both my seminar and the other courses running. I was still in awe of the 12th century castle I was staying in and the social bar area complete with medieval shields banners and armour for knights.

On 30 September the seminar started with the traditional meet and greets and then straight into presentations. The course was made up of existing or aspiring drone operators from the United States, Germany, Ireland, Belgium and Pakistan. Our seminar lecturers John, David and Tim are all from law enforcement in the United States, except David who was a Firefighter, and he was reminded of that daily.



IMAGE: Course opening picture in notes and Gimborn image

The seminar covered a range of topics such as: drones in police work, crowd management, counter UAS, mapping basics, fundamentals of flying, UAV training, NIST, indoor tactical flying and the use of thermals.

Along with the seminar sessions we were introduced to a range of practical drone flying skills such as flying with VR headsets, flying inside buildings, search sweeps and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) method for skill testing. We were fortunate to have guest speakers from the Belgium Federal Police Drone Unit in Genk. Bart and his team have developed an excellent response capability using drones for intelligence and surveillance, especially in response to crowd control and port protection. Along with tactics and deployment options we enjoyed a range of demonstrations and examples of effective use of the technology.

Along with our guest speakers our course managers John and Tim provided expert advice and presentations based on their countless years of experience running drone programs in their home jurisdictions in Florida and California. John and Tim brought extensive value to their presentations having been responsible for the development of their police agencies drone programs. They presented on the use of drones in public order, public events and a 24 month study John conducted of drones being used to detect gravesites using infrared and ultraviolet cameras with impressive results.

A large component of the seminar was focused on the NIST method for testing standards. David took us through a range of programs NIST has undertaken with a focus on drone methods and testing. I found it immensely valuable as the NIST method and material can be adapted to a range of policing specialisations and tasks. I was particularly interested in the NIST methods as a Bomb Technician, the organisation offers a range of training programs and material to provide standardised testing regimes. The NIST material will provide a solid foundation for understanding testing regimes for skillsets such as drones and bomb response robots.

Along with five days of drone flying and presentations the seminar undertook a trip to Cologne. I was keen to try the Kosh beers in Cologne and fortunately there was a brewery close by to where we were dropped off. Cologne was a beautiful city and provided an excellent opportunity to purchase some gifts for my wife and son while seeing the sites.

The seminar was a valuable undertaking and a great use of the Arthur Troop scholarship; not just for the benefits of attending the course, learning more about the fundamentals of drone use in policing. I also valued the opportunity to visit Gimborn and network with fellow IPA members from around

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the world. The seminar and networking I experienced has provided valuable tools to progress my understanding of drones, their use in my agency and how they can be best used to support police operations.



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IMAGE: group image at Gimborn and course images

KOBLENZ

After the seminar and a great week at Gimborn my next stop was Koblenz. On 4 October I arrived in Koblenz, and it was a beautiful night, so I took advantage of the weather and went for a walk around the new part of the city. The following morning, I was picked up at my accommodation by Ruidiger from IPA Koblenz. Our first stop for the day was the Police Operations Centre in the Rhineland-Palatinate Police Headquarters. As I currently work in Police Operations, I was interested in how our German colleagues manage their workloads and dispatch patrols. It was interesting to see the systems in place and how resources were managed, I was also granted permission to get a photo at the operations managers desk and run the district for about 5 seconds. Later, I was invited to inspect the stations patrol vehicles. Koblenz was the first location in Germany I had attended that utilised Audi station wagons as patrol vehicles, while not downplaying my Kia Sorento the Audi was an excellent looking patrol vehicle, the incorporation of the weapons and protection in the rear of the vehicle was impressive and practical.

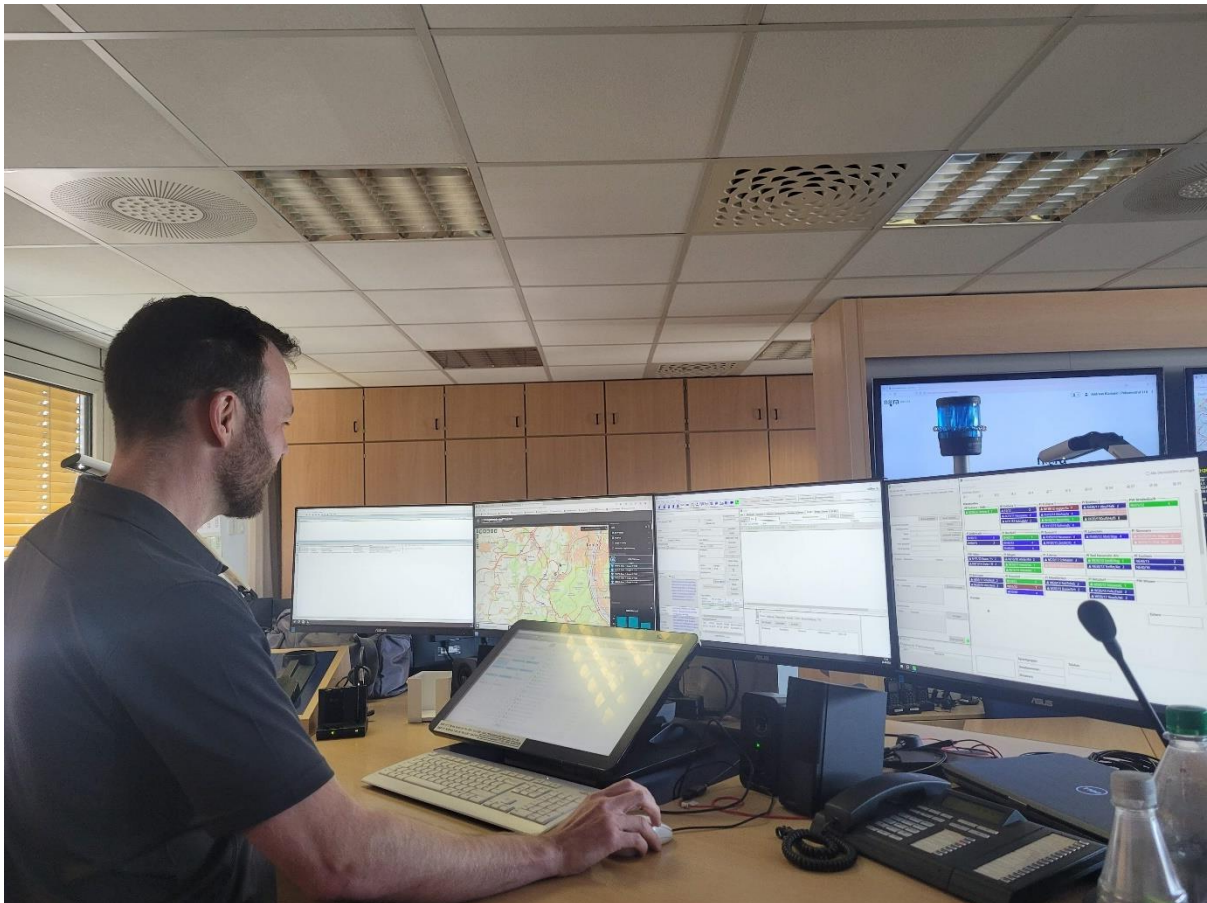








IMAGE: DOM image, police vehicles and Koblenz city





IMAGE: IPA members and the roman mine

After the Police visit Ruidiger took me on a tour of City, Koblenz is a beautiful city with a rich history. We visited the old city and had lunch at a small pub next to the Mosal River. We visited the Kaiser-Wilhelm Monument where the Mosal and the Rhine rivers meet. It's a fantastic monument to empire, something we simply don't build anymore, interesting the allied soldiers shot the top off the monument, and it was rebuilt later after the war, everywhere you look there is a scratch or bruise

from a time long ago weather American, French, Roman, it's a city with a rich history. After a brief trip in the cable car, we arrived at the Ehrenbreitstein Fortress sitting atop the Mosal valley. The gigantic fortress was built by the Prussians between 1817 and 1828.

On 6 October Ruidiger picked me up from my accommodation to go meet with Claudia, another IPA member in Koblenz. Claudia offered to take me on a tour of the roman stone mine before going to the Rhineland-Palatinate Police Aerial Unit. The mine was amazing, a rich history of the construction and mining methods of ancient Rome. On arrival at Koblenz-Winningen Airport I was met with the noise of two police helicopters taking off in a southerly direction, I later found out the helicopters were leaving on a training mission near Munich. We meet with Thomas one of the chief pilots and a Polizeihaupt Kommissar. Thomas showed us the existing Airbus helicopters and the new model they had recently received. We discussed the usefulness and benefits of the airwing and some of the challenges airwings face with the introduction of drones. As my agency does not have a traditional airwing it was insightful to hear about the types of incidents the helicopter responds too and their abilities.

Soon it was time to leave Koblenz and go to my final destination Frankfurt. Koblenz was a lovely city and I made some great friends in Ruidiger and Claudia.







IMAGE: Helicopters of the aerial unit

FRANKFURT

On 6 October I took my final Deutsche Bahn train ride to Frankfurt. When I arrived in Frankfurt, I knew instantly it was a bigger and busier city, the train station and the mood of the place was more fast paced than Koblenz and Hamburg, even Berlin. I had nothing planned on the 7th of October; it was an opportunity to explore the city. My accommodation was near Romer, the city's 14th century city hall, I enjoyed a breakfast and a coffee walking around the old part of the city. After a stroll down the Rhine, I decided to attend the Kriminal Police Museum, on arrival I found out it was only open to school and police groups by appointment; but the museum was near the Deutsche Bundesbank Museum (Germany's Central Bank), as a former banker I could not pass up the opportunity to see some currency and bullion. In the afternoon while exploring the city I stumbled into an Asian food market and then another museum about life for children under the Nazis, it was yet another example which was present throughout my trip of the changes and adaptability of the German people, their acceptance of the past and how they move forward as united people.





IMAGE: Frankfurt city

On 8 October I packed my bag for the last time in Germany and left my accommodation knowing I was now in the end zone and mentally preparing for yet another long trip. I had planned to meet with Julien and Dirk, IPA Frankfurt members at the 4th Polizeirevier, the hardest Police station in Frankfurt. Kirk, a Polizeihaupt Kommissar at the station meet me outside with Julian who works at another station on the outskirts. Julian made a special trip into the city to come and meet me which was great. Kirk organised for one of his units to take me on a ride along and show me the sites of the dark part of town. After a brief introduction and trying on the active shooter kits we went for a tour of the hard streets of Frankfurt inspecting some hotels and a drop-in centre for drug users. Germany has an advanced version of the drug decriminalisation laws we have in Canberra; it was insightful to see how the laws had changed the culture and make up of the inner city. While we were walking the beat Julian intercepted a female with a rifle butt in her handbag, not a normal item to have in central Frankfurt. We toured the area and tried to find some jobs to tag onto. We only had one job which was a hire car collision. The team showed me how they complete the entire investigation using a dedicated phone app on their issued mobile phones. After a quick tour to the top of the Deutsche Bahn Tower to see the city views, we found out the riot squad were undertaking a 'control operation' near the train station. On arrival at the control order, I saw about 20 police with the same number of pedestrians lined up against a wall in varied stages of being searched. While German laws collectively reduce police powers to search, the control order allows police to stop groups of people for the purpose of conducting checks and searches, but only in specific areas of high crime like central Frankfurt.





IMAGE: Frankfurt Police visit

After some more coin, shield and patch swaps it was time to head to the airport. Julian was kind enough to give me a final ride on the autobahn before heading home. Two days later I arrived home with plenty of patches, new friends and found memories of my German adventure.

I would like to thank the IPA for intrusting me with the scholarship and all the IPA members who took time out of their busy lives to show me their work, their cities and in many cases meet their friends and family.

The scholarship and travel were a fantastic experience, one I will cherish forever. I would encourage anyone who has not applied for the scholarship to think outside the box, find something you want to achieve to better yourself and the IPA, then simply apply and keep applying. The networks, friends and memories I gained from this experience will last a lifetime. We have a unique and special connection in our professional vocations, our blue family does not stop at borders. The IPA links those bonds across jurisdictions, countries and oceans.

