

STORIES FROM THE

皇家
香港
警察

ROYAL
HONG KONG
POLICE

*Fifty accounts from officers of
Hong Kong's Colonial-era police force*



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The Royal Hong Kong Police Association

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STORIES FROM THE ROYAL HONG KONG POLICE:
Fifty accounts from officers of Hong Kong's colonial-era police force

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Preface

Keith H. Lomas

Whenever former members of the Royal Hong Kong Police meet on a social occasion, talk inevitably turns to yesteryear, and stories of interesting incidents or characters are bandied about. This is true of any military or police organisation, or indeed of any organisation where the nature of their work of necessity relies on trust and comradeship.

These stories in their way are a historical record of life in Hong Kong, and of events which were not necessarily printed in official records. The accounts of incidents are often one man's view of what happened, and do not give an overall picture, or indeed may be at variance with the official view or the public perception.

The 'Royal' Hong Kong Police ceased to exist in 1997 following the return of sovereignty of the territory to China from British control. However, under the terms of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, expatriates in the Hong Kong government administration, including police officers, could continue their career until retirement. As the years pass, officers with knowledge of the Hong Kong scene and incidents pre-1997 get fewer. There is no doubt that now, some twenty-odd years after the Handover to China, many good stories have been lost forever.

This book is an attempt to ameliorate this situation and it may be that interest will be stimulated to encourage a second edition.

As indicated above, these accounts are individuals' perceptions of Hong Kong life, and are the personal responsibility of the authors. The editorial sub-committee made it clear to contributors that their articles should not be used to criticise any individual or the Royal Hong Kong Police Force.

This is not to deny that mistakes were made, nor that the Force did not have dark periods. Notably there were serious problems with corruption, as was present to a greater or lesser degree throughout the Hong Kong administration, and in the private sector, up to the 1970s. The corruption issue was tackled by Sir Murray MacLehose, the governor of Hong Kong from November 1971 to May 1982. Legislation and the creation of the Independent Commission Against Corruption in 1974 resulted in the territory probably having the most corruption-free administration anywhere in the world. From that dark period, the Royal Hong Kong Police emerged to be a fine force of which its members were, and are, justifiably proud.

But this book is not a history, and the corruption issue is well documented elsewhere.

The articles have been collected and reviewed by a sub-committee of the Royal Hong Kong Police Association (www.rhkpa.org), consisting of Keith H. Lomas, Keith Braithwaite and Simon Roberts. With many different writers, inevitably the quality and styles are uneven, but we hope that readers will find it a light read and may obtain some idea of police activity, and of Hong Kong life in general, in the pre-1997 era.

The '633' Squad

John Murray

Having left Police Training School (PTS) in mid-October 1973, we were all to do a spell in the Colony Special Duty Squad. This was an anti-drugs and gambling squad which had no boundaries as to where it acted in the territory. It was also under no obligation to tell anyone where it was about to strike. Superintendent Ko Chun led us and his deputy was Chief Inspector Jim Main. This unit was much better known as '*Luk Saam Saam*', which is Cantonese for 'Six Three Three'. It was so named after the exploits of the fictional WWII Royal Air Force '633 Squadron' from the British film of the same name. It was an exercise to get us used to policing the colony and doing the paperwork necessary to take people to court.

We were briefed for the first time by Mr Ko, who left us in no doubt as to what he expected from us. It was going to be hard work, with many periods of observations, acting on tip offs and intelligence, and many long hours carrying out operations. He was not kidding. At the briefing we were divided into teams of three. We also arranged a series of rendezvous points at various strategic locations throughout the colony and we referred to them by a number.

After an initial couple of days to settle in and study available information, we were ready for our first raid. On 23rd October, we raided second-floor premises at No. 61 Russell Street in Causeway Bay where there was an illegal gambling operation. After using an axe and crowbar to gain entry we arrested ninety-one people and seized a large amount of money and gambling paraphernalia. At Wan Chai Police Station we were not very popular. The cells were quickly overwhelmed as were all available rooms that were reasonably secure. Each prisoner had to be documented, searched

and personal property listed and signed for. A charge sheet then had to be prepared as well as a bail sheet. All the exhibits had to be listed and stored away. We got off duty at 8.00 am and the officer who had been chosen to lead the raid, Chris Beck, had to be at court that morning. Two of the prisoners pleaded guilty as they were from Singapore and did not want to return for a later court appearance. All the other eighty-nine pleaded not guilty and so a full case file had to be prepared. It was a pretty big one when it was completed.

On our next raid, we had information that there was a reinforced metal door on the only entrance, so we turned up with a Stihl chainsaw. Dave Madoc-Jones was put in charge of it. When we got the go-ahead to hit the place, we all piled into a lift and went up several floors to our destination. Dave was a bit worried that the saw might not start quickly enough when we got there, so he had started the engine at the bottom and we stupidly had got into the lift with him. By the time we got out, the lift was so full of smoke that we staggered about coughing and spluttering and trying not to be sick, unable to hear anything due to the ringing in our ears from the two-stroke engine. By the time we had used the saw to gain entry, the money from the gambling establishment had gone out of the window and down the stairwell. Luckily we managed to recover it. Another successful raid. But only just!

A few days later, after being briefed by Chief Inspector Perkins in Kowloon, Dave Fairley and I went looking for pornographic literature at a bookstall in an alley opposite Bristol Avenue. We decided to pretend to be off-duty soldiers. After only a few moments, the bookstall proprietor offered us some pornographic magazines and then, to our surprise, asked us if we would like to see some films. We ad-libbed and readily agreed. So, after a phone call, he took us to a dingy apartment on Nathan Road where another man indicated to us to sit on an old settee and demanded thirty dollars from each of us, which we paid. We then watched four pornographic films screened using a noisy old 8mm projector. Video recorders were just coming onto the market at that time. We were then shown our way out. It was the first time in my life that I had seen pornographic films and I was very surprised at the

extremely candid content. Later that day we obtained warrants and hit the bookshop and the flat where both men were arrested and the offending material seized.

As the officer responsible for these arrests, I was at court the following morning at 9 am, and after they were found guilty, I had to return to the squad where we were briefed for another gambling raid, this time in the Yau Ma Tei area of Kowloon. Just after 10 pm we hit No. 87 Woo Sung Street armed with a warrant and again arrested a large number of suspects and seized a large quantity of gambling material. That night it was the turn of the staff of Yau Ma Tei Police Station to be put out. I finally got off duty at 4.10 am, a very long shift. On this occasion Mr Ko had arranged for a reporter from the *South China Morning Post* to accompany us and our nocturnal activities duly appeared in that publication.

We then had a rather lean time for a week during which time every suspected premises we visited resulted in nothing being found. However, on the afternoon of 5th November, me, Dave Kendal and Julian Turnbull were checking out a few addresses in the Western District of Hong Kong Island when we saw two men walk out of an alley. They were rolling down their sleeves and rubbing one arm. We all knew what was going on, so without a word being spoken we went into the alley and behind a wooden partition we found eight men squatting down in a line. Each had one sleeve rolled up and at the head of the queue sitting on a box was a man with a syringe. Beside him, on a table, were the drugs and other equipment which was used. The eight squatting down were easily arrested. The man with the syringe tried to run for it but got nowhere. They were duly taken to Western Police Station where they were charged. This was a lucky break, simply being in the right place at the right time.

Over the next few weeks we upset most of the police stations in the colony when we arrived with large numbers of prisoners and vast amounts of exhibits. The three of us who were married men also upset our wives, by on many occasions leaving home at 8 or 9 am and not returning until the small hours. When we weren't at work we were sleeping.

On 13th November, we raided a premises in Causeway Bay where opium was being smoked. My job on this occasion, after entering, was to draw a plan of the inside of the premises to record where the occupants had been and the location of the smoking equipment. Ten people were arrested inside and they were all extremely drowsy from the opium. They had to be gently guided from the building. The place must have been used as a 'divan', as an opium den is correctly called, for a long time as the walls and ceiling were chalky white with the smoke from the opium pipes. The other officers were constantly coming and going with prisoners while I sat drawing my plan when I suddenly felt very weak and rather intoxicated. The next thing I remember is lying outside, where I had been pulled by my colleagues, in order for me to get some fresh air to recover from breathing the narcotic fumes. There were no after-effects. After a while, I completely recovered and carried on with the job, but not inside!

Later that month we carried out a raid that became quite famous locally and could have had political consequences. This was the drugs raid that we carried out in the Kowloon Walled City.

At this stage I must give a quick history lesson in order that the reader may fully appreciate what a momentous occasion it was.

In 1842, the Island of Hong Kong had been ceded to Britain following the First Opium War, but not at that time the Kowloon Peninsula. Part of Kowloon was ceded to Great Britain after the Second Anglo-Chinese War in the 1860s but in 1898, by a convention signed in Peking, the territory of Hong Kong was extended to include the remainder of Kowloon and a land area up to the Shenzhen River, the latter subsequently being called the New Territories. A very small part of Kowloon, a village referred to as the Walled City and which had been a Chinese administrative centre, remained Chinese territory. This was so that China could keep a vested interest in what was once their land, and their ships, including warships, could continue to use the village waterfront. Over the course of the years, land reclamation took place and this little piece of China was left completely surrounded by British territory. For very many years, certainly while civil war raged in China, no Chinese official was appointed to administer it. The

reason for its existence became obsolete but although China ceased to supervise it, Hong Kong laws and customs were not enforced.

The Kowloon Walled City as it was called, was thus a completely lawless place and who knows what went on in there which the outside world never got to know about. Despite the name, it had lost its wall long ago. Hong Kong building regulations did not apply here so there were high-rise buildings crammed closely together with alleyways between them just wide enough for someone to walk along. The contrast between that place and the surrounding area under Hong Kong jurisdiction made the Walled City stick out like a sore thumb. At ground level there were many trading premises, but the majority of them were dentists, run, apparently, by dentists qualified in China, but not qualified to practise in the colony.

It was not uncommon for a fleeing criminal to disappear down one of the dark alleys in order to escape from the pursuing police, who did not follow. In fact, to sum up, it was a disgrace that it was there, but unfortunately it was and there was nothing that could be done about it, or so everyone thought up to that time.

So it was against this background that we were briefed by Superintendent Ko regarding a trial raid at a premises used to smoke heroin, or 'chasing the dragon' as it was more colloquially called. He assured us that the governor of Hong Kong, Sir Murray MacLehose, had sanctioned the raid and that it was his intention to see the reaction by China. In other words, our real mission was to probe the water and see if any of the ripples got as far as Beijing. We all looked around at one another and I could see that one or two of our team had already been affected by the ripples and we hadn't even touched the water yet.

Later that day, armed with a warrant that had no legal standing in the Walled City, we made our way quickly, in single file, through a maze of narrow streets. We passed astonished residents who quickly got out of our way, until we got to the place that was named on the warrant. The door was not even closed, after all they were hardly expecting anyone in authority to call. In we went and arrested several men in the act of 'chasing the dragon' (smoking heroin). Sufficient evidence was seized in order to prove the case

against them and out we went, following the same alleyways that we had come down. I think that at this stage everyone's biggest fear was of becoming separated and getting lost. We had acted like a snatch squad but the operation had been well executed and our prisoners were duly convicted the next day. Of course, looking back, there had been more to this than we had seen ourselves. The magistrate who heard the case must have been briefed about it in order for him to accept jurisdiction to try the case and the divisional commander at the Kowloon Police Station where we took the prisoners must have been told to accept them.

About a week or so later we were told that the Beijing reaction to our raid had been nil and this therefore opened the way for further raids, although not by us, thus ensuring that it was not quite as lawless as it had been. We had been the thin end of the wedge, so to speak. Eventually the place was demolished after consultation with China, but even then it took until the early 1990s for this to happen.

After two months carrying out these duties we were disbanded so that the next group leaving the training school could take over from us and we were posted to various police stations throughout the colony. However, what we had learned stood us in good stead for later as most of us would be required, on our own initiative, to carry out raids as part of our normal duties.

I was posted to Wan Chai, a bustling area which was known for its bars, restaurants and nightlife, and more. One raid that I carried out there sticks in my mind. I received some information that there was a brothel operating among the many, many rooms in a block on Jaffe Road. I gathered a small team together and we changed into plain clothes. We had the necessary authority and so went straight to the property which we found to be open. So taking that as a green light, we went inside. There we found a dingy, poorly lit room full of small tables with chairs. There were several men sitting at various places drinking tea. There were teapots on tables as well as cups, bowls and the like. I was taken aback. This was not what we expected. There did not seem to be anyone in charge, just men drinking tea. I wondered if perhaps it was illegal alcohol, but having sniffed a few teapots decided that it wasn't. The officers on my team

spoke to the men but they were just here to drink tea they said. All very implausible and there was something not right.

As I was thinking what to do next, a hidden door in one of the walls opened and an attractive girl entered, almost naked, carrying a tray with a teapot and cups on it. She saw us and stopped dead in her tracks. We, in contrast, were galvanised into action and were through the hidden entrance in seconds where we found another room fitted with cubicles. A man sat at a small desk and his jaw dropped as we pushed past him. This was our opportunity and we needed to secure evidence of what was going on. We were able to look over into the cubicles and see that in every one that was occupied there was a man and girl engaged in some form of sexual activity. As the shouts of alarm began, men and girls tried to escape in various stages of undress. However, we had closed the door so we had a captive group. The participants of this episode duly appeared in court the following day.

Vietnamese Refugees Arrive

Ian Lacy-Smith

The sixth day of May, 1975, was to be like no other day during my long service with the Royal Hong Kong Police Force.

During the previous fortnight I had been following the final chaotic days in South Vietnam. When the Viet Cong decided on an outright attack on Saigon, I thought: 'What a catastrophic turn of events, how did it ever come to this?' Their recent atrocities and massacres in the surrounding provinces seemed to spell disaster for Saigon. It didn't help either that the American Ambassador, Graham Martin, was reluctant to order an evacuation of his embassy until the situation was hopeless, 'for fear of spreading panic'. Perhaps he had also been hoping that further negotiations might halt the Viet Cong advance. No such luck, and panic to escape their clutches did spread across Saigon, especially when it became known that President Thieu of South Vietnam had himself fled on 27th April, leaving the vice-president in charge. Ambassador Martin was one of the last Americans to be airlifted from the embassy, just hours before the surrender of the nation by General Minh on 30th April, 1975.

Another to flee before the surrender was Tran Dinh Truong, the owner of Vishipco Lines, the largest shipping company in South Vietnam. At least he left several freighters behind for his employees to help evacuate refugees if they could. His company had made him a fortune by supplying the American forces with all kinds of war materiel and so resettlement in the USA must have been a formality for him and his wife and four children. He was to make another fortune there in real estate, much of it in New York.

One of the freighters he left behind was the MS *Truong Xuan* and on 29th April, despite being grossly overloaded, it managed to sail

from Saigon with 3,628 refugees on board. However, on reaching international waters of the South China Sea, after sporadic engine failures and once running aground, it ran into really serious trouble. Water was rising in the engine-room because the pumps had stopped working and no amount of manual effort could prevent the vessel from slowly sinking. As it did so, its captain, Pham Ngoc Luy, put out a distress signal and the Danish container ship *MS Clara Maersk*, en route to Hong Kong, came to its rescue on 2nd May. On humanitarian grounds, its captain, Anton Olsen, agreed that everyone including the crew could board his vessel and despite the increase in his own ship's load, he was able to steer it unhindered all the way to Hong Kong, arriving there on 4th May.



Vietnamese refugees aboard MS Truong Xuan

Once the Hong Kong government had agreed that this first massive number of Vietnamese refugees could stay in Hong Kong until resettlement, they disembarked and were taken to two camps hastily prepared for them in the New Territories and one temporary camp in Harcourt Road on Hong Kong Island. Breaking down the numbers, just over 2,000 refugees went to the recently vacated British Army camp at Dodwell's Ridge; 1,055 to another Army camp in Sai Kung; and 513 single men were moved from Harcourt Road to a third Army camp in Sek Kong when spare barrack accommodation was ready for them. The total from the MS *Clara Maersk* being duly recorded as 3,743, including the crew of the MS *Truong Xuan* and three babies born at sea.



*The MS Clara Maersk about to receive
Vietnamese refugees from MS Truong Xuan*

Her Majesty the Queen, and the Duke of Edinburgh, would have been given all this news by a hard-pressed Hong Kong Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, as they too had arrived in Hong Kong on 4th May, at the start of their first state visit to the territory!

One of the three new babies was named Chieu Anh and her touching life story can be found on the internet site titled 'MS *Truong Xuan* – Voyage to Freedom'. Her hero is Captain Pham who went on in 1994 to be the founder of the Vietnam Human Rights Network in the USA. His action in evacuating so many people had already been recognised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). His own hero is Captain Olsen, who was later knighted by the Queen of Denmark for his humane deed. In 2009, Captain Pham honoured Captain Olsen's grave in the Faroe Islands; and he himself is still working in Virginia despite being in his nineties. What a remarkable life for an outstanding man.

Late on 6th May, the number of refugees at Dodwell's Ridge Camp was boosted by another seventy arriving by road from Shau Kei Wan Police Station, and this is where I enter the story. At that time I happened to be the officer-in-charge of this sub-divisional station in the northeast of Hong Kong Island where there is a small harbour. At about 08.00 am that morning, my duty sergeant came to my office to report that he had just received a message from a local resident that a large number of Vietnamese refugees were gathered in his garden after a journey in two fishing boats from Saigon. 'Port of First Asylum, what an achievement, a day to remember, get it right'; all these thoughts crossed my mind.

'Tell the gentleman,' I said to the sergeant, 'that they will have to come here for processing and also tell the barrack sergeant he is to arrange to have them transported to the station. He is also to set up benches, tables, chairs and a few desks in the shady part of the compound and warn the kitchen that we will need extra food and water, how much I don't yet know. I'm on my way to see them and the boats.' Before leaving the station, I broke the news to my Divisional Superintendent, John Macdonald. He then set the wheels in motion to basically treat our police station as a mini port

of entry for the day, or for as long as it took the Security Branch to arrange for the refugees' next abode.

In the garden of a house near the Shau Kei Wan harbour were seventy outwardly calm but tired Vietnamese and the basics of their journey were described to me. The two fishing boats were shrimp trawlers owned by a joint South Vietnamese/Hong Kong consortium which would explain how the skippers knew their way around the far reaches of Hong Kong harbour. I learnt more on the way to the boats. The owners and crews had been preparing for their escape by sea while the Viet Cong were closing in on Saigon and most of those who managed to join them were their families or friends. But on the way down the Saigon River they had been boarded by a group of about a dozen South Vietnamese military officers who were taking flight in speedboats but which obviously could not go far before running out of fuel. These officers were relieved to hear that the trawlers' skippers hoped to reach the safety of Hong Kong and settled down on board for the journey. This was uneventful until the engine of one of the boats failed and the two had to be strapped together. Fuel was transferred from the ailing boat to the other one as needed, and in relatively calm seas, they were able to reach Hong Kong by the early hours of 6th May.

I asked if any of the military officers were still with the main group. 'Oh no,' I was told, 'they said they would take public transport into the centre of Hong Kong and seek asylum at the American Consulate.' I later heard that they had indeed jumped on a public light bus in the centre of Shau Kei Wan but I could not confirm anything about their subsequent movements.

John Macdonald and I then examined the two boats. All appeared as expected with fishing boats except for several small arms and some loose ammunition scattered around one of them. I was told that they had been jettisoned by the military officers before catching their bus, and wisely so. I later passed them on to the Force Armourer for disposal, apart from nine flare cartridges which I handed over to the Force Bomb Disposal Officer, Ron Bagrie, who then happened to be living in a quarter at Shau Kei Wan Police Station. As regards the actual boats, Hong Kong members of the consortium took responsibility for them and I assume that after

repairs and servicing, they carried on trawling in the peaceful areas of the South China Sea. It would also have made sense for the fishing families amongst the seventy to have applied for resettlement in Hong Kong. Some of these first thousands of refugees certainly did apply for Hong Kong residency and were accepted.

Returning to the police station, I found the processing under way exactly as if the group of seventy had arrived at a normal port of entry. This activity was to carry on for most of the day. The government's secretary for security had been advised of the situation and officials from the Immigration, Customs and Excise, and Port Health Departments, quickly arrived to perform their statutory duties. During the afternoon I learnt that all of the seventy refugees would join those who had been sent to Dodwell's Ridge from the MS *Clara Maersk* the previous day.

With the aid of an English-speaking refugee, I was able to chat with some of the heads of the families. They were understandably very strained after their stressful experiences, but relieved and grateful to be in safe British hands. I clearly remember one family consisting of two parents, nine lovely daughters aged from about ten to twenty years and two of their grandparents. Putting myself in the father's shoes, how much more traumatic could it have been for him to be firstly uprooted from his native country and then to undertake a potentially perilous journey with such a large family and an uncertain future ahead of them? I wished him and his family an early resettlement and every good fortune, as I did with all of the others, as they left Shau Kei Wan for Dodwell's Ridge that evening. The next day, I contacted the camp manager and former police colleague David Weeks and was told that they were glad to be there and were settling in well with all the others.

In 1976, the Hong Kong government applied to the UNHCR for more material aid and faster processing of the hundreds or even thousands still being cared for in the three camps. By the end of 1977, all had been resettled in the USA, France, Germany, Australia or Hong Kong. As at 31st May 2000, when the last Hong Kong refugee camp closed at Pillar Point near Tuen Mun in the New Territories, a total of 143,700 from both South and North Vietnam had been resettled in the free world, and over 67,000 repatriated

back to Vietnam, the last of them forcibly by the Special Administrative Region government following the return of sovereignty of Hong Kong to China in 1997. This does not tell the whole story but what a tremendous job the UNHCR, the Security Branch and disciplined services of Hong Kong had done, often in the most trying of circumstances.

Thanks to the Internet, many records of this twenty-five-year period can be studied, including the experiences of numerous passengers of the ill-fated MS *Truong Xuan* and their subsequent wait for resettlement. One of the passengers was nine-year-old Debbie Nguyen Xuan Diep, whose story of her family's eventful journey starting fifty miles outside Saigon was to appear in the 628-page book *Truong Xuan – Journey to Freedom*, published in 2010. Her whole family was blessed with enormous slices of good luck along the way, not least that while at Sai Kung Camp they were accepted by Australia, a country they now love. By 2016, her family group of ten escapees, including two grandparents, had grown to thirty five, all thriving in and around Sydney. They, and everyone else, arriving in Hong Kong on the MS *Clara Maersk* on 4th May, 1975, will never forget that they almost certainly owe their lives to the skill and humanitarian action of two outstanding ships' captains, Pham Ngoc Luy and Anton Olsen. Debbie Nguyen is now an accountant with a family of her own and is still gathering stories provided by her fellow refugee passengers.

I will always remember the gratitude shown to the staff of Shau Kei Wan Police Station by the group of seventy Vietnamese refugees who, in common with those from the MS *Clara Maersk*, would have suffered many an anxious moment in their search for freedom. It was a privilege to briefly look after them on 6th May, 1975, and I hope that they went on to prosper in the countries that accepted them.

Gun Battle In Causeway Bay

R.A. (Bob) Steele

There are good postings and there are bad postings. Commandant, Police Tactical Unit (PTU) is a good posting and I was fortunate enough to hold that post in the early 1980s. At that time the unit was still housed at an ex-army base at Volunteer Slopes by Luen Wo Hui, Fanling in post-war Nissen huts – the same huts that I had first seen on posting there as an inspector platoon commander in 1966 and again as a superintendent company commander in 1975. I swear that each time I returned I was welcomed back by the same spiders and mosquitos.

PTU's main task was to train the Force from constable through to superintendent to deal with public order incidents and provide a Commissioner's Reserve in case of emergency, be it a public order incident or a natural disaster. Most officers in the Force went through PTU – many more than once, as I did, in different ranks. In addition to this, the commandant PTU was also responsible for the administration of the Special Duties Unit (SDU), though its operational use had to be sanctioned by the deputy director, operations, at Police Headquarters. The SDU, under the command of a superintendent, was housed close to PTU and was Hong Kong's counter-terrorist unit. They were highly trained in this work and the structure was modelled on that of the UK's 22nd Regiment Special Air Service. Only in very rare circumstances were the SDU permitted to be used to deal with 'civilian' criminal incidents. As I was about to finish my time at PTU, one such occasion arose.

On 31st January 1984, five men, each armed with a handgun, robbed the Po Sang Bank in Des Voeux Road, Central of 138.4 million Japanese yen (approximately HK\$10 million) as the cash was being transferred from a security van to the bank. During the

course of the robbery a Remington shotgun was seized from one of the cash-in-transit security guards.

The robbers made off on foot but soon commandeered a private car, forcing the driver out at gunpoint, and then drove off towards Eastern District. Beat patrol officers attempted to follow but lost the vehicle in traffic. A general alert was put out and, shortly thereafter, an officer on patrol reported seeing the vehicle near Lai Tak Tsuen in Causeway Bay.

Another officer reported seeing the vehicle enter the multi-storey car park in Fortress Hill Road and a number of Emergency Unit cars and patrol officers converged on the carpark. Sergeant 11811 Fu Siu-wing of EU alighted from his EU car and followed two beat patrol police officers into the car park. As the patrol officers entered the car park, four of the robbers opened fire – all were armed and one had a firearm in each hand! The officers took cover and returned fire. The robbers then ran out in the direction of Sergeant Fu who engaged them in fire, taking cover as he could. In his attempts to apprehend the robbers, he exposed himself to a fusillade of shots and considerable danger. By some miracle he was not hit though his uniform was subsequently found to be holed by at least one bullet and a car park employee was injured. In spite of this, Sergeant Fu showed great presence of mind and only fired four rounds from his service weapon.

The robbers ran off along King's Road with Sergeant Fu and others in pursuit. More shots were fired at the pursuing officers and another EU car arrived on the scene which also came under fire. Police Constable (PC) 1862 Yu Chau-pui and the other officers alighted from the vehicle and, with the others, chased the robbers into Fuk Yuen Street when they were again fired upon. Taking cover behind a fire hydrant, Yu fired two more shots and hit one of the robbers in the leg. The injured robber helped by one of his accomplices fired again at Yu but hit and killed a female pedestrian.

The robbers hijacked another vehicle and made off along Electric Road against the traffic flow and firing at a press vehicle which had stopped behind the robber's vehicle. Blocked by traffic at Hing Fat Street, the robbers were confronted by PC 17377 Cheng Chi-ming of Eastern District, Traffic Team. Having seen the

robbers' vehicle driving the wrong way along Electric Road, Cheng had taken his motorcycle to the junction of Hing Fat Street to intercept them. He immediately came under fire and took shelter in a doorway, calling for pedestrians to take cover. He then fired once at the robbers who were still in their car. Cheng fired again hitting the vehicle. Still shooting and hitting a male pedestrian in the thigh, the robbers abandoned the vehicle and fled on foot into Victoria Park Road. They commandeered yet another vehicle and though Sergeant Fu, who had followed on foot from the start arrived, they drove off and evaded capture.

The ¥138.4 million and a Remington shotgun were recovered from the vehicle which had been abandoned in the multi-storey car park.

In the early hours of 5th February, a male surrendered to Kowloon City Police Station in need of treatment for a gunshot wound to the leg. This was the robber who had been shot by Yu in Fuk Yuen Street. Questioning of this suspect by Chief Inspector R.J. Pierce of CID Hong Kong Island elicited the information that the other robbers might have been hiding in Flat 2303, Wun Sha Tower, Causeway Bay. Pierce, having assessed the danger posed by these robbers, requested that the Special Duties Unit be utilised to effect the arrest. This was approved. While waiting for the SDU officers to arrive, Pierce prepared as detailed a plan of the interior of the premises as he could, from the information provided by the injured suspect.

Acting Chief Inspector C.M. Davey, SDU's operations officer, undertook the detailed planning and operational briefing for the elements of BRAVO Team SDU, under the command of Inspector M.J. Lovatt, who were to conduct the assault.

At 08.00 hours on 5th February, Inspector Lovatt and another member of BRAVO Team made a close reconnaissance of the flat. Like many flats, the front door was protected by an iron grille and Lovatt, undetected, managed to lay an explosive charge on the grille.

At 08.15, Lovatt detonated the charge which removed the grille cleanly from its hinges and also demolished the wooden front door to the flat. Upon entering, Lovatt met a hail of gunfire and returned

five shots, hitting one robber in the chest. The robbers continued to fire from the end room of the flat at Lovatt who was in an exposed position. Lovatt's second-in-command, Sergeant Ng Kwan-wai, followed him into the flat and though now himself exposed to the fire from the end room, opened fire with his H&K MP5 sub-machine gun to provide cover for Lovatt. Ng's weapon then jammed but he drew his sidearm and continued to cover Lovatt.

One member of BRAVO team providing backup was shot in the leg. Two stun grenades were thrown by other members of BRAVO team. The robbers then retreated, locking themselves in the end room. Sergeant Ng called on them to surrender, which they eventually did without further gunfire. Four men emerged from the end room and after some initial resistance they were subdued and arrested. Lovatt then secured the premises, seizing seven firearms including semi-automatic heavy-calibre pistols and loaded magazines. Given the number of rounds fired in that small flat it is something of a miracle that casualties were relatively light.

Subsequent investigations led to a factory block in Kwai Chung where, on 8th February, five police revolvers that had been stolen between 1975 and 1980, five other pistols, two shotguns, spare parts, silencers, over 1,000 rounds of ammunition, as well as a number of knives were seized; then four days later a further 9mm pistol, one .45 pistol and three magazines and two .38 pistols. All in all, 23 firearms were seized as a result of this case.

As I left PTU, all five suspects were awaiting trial on charges of murder, shooting with intent and robbery. For their parts in bringing this dangerous gang of criminals to justice, a number of officers received honours and awards ranging from a Queen's Gallantry Medal for Inspector Lovatt and Queen's Commendations for Brave Conduct to Sergeants Fu and Ng, to Commissioner's Commendations.