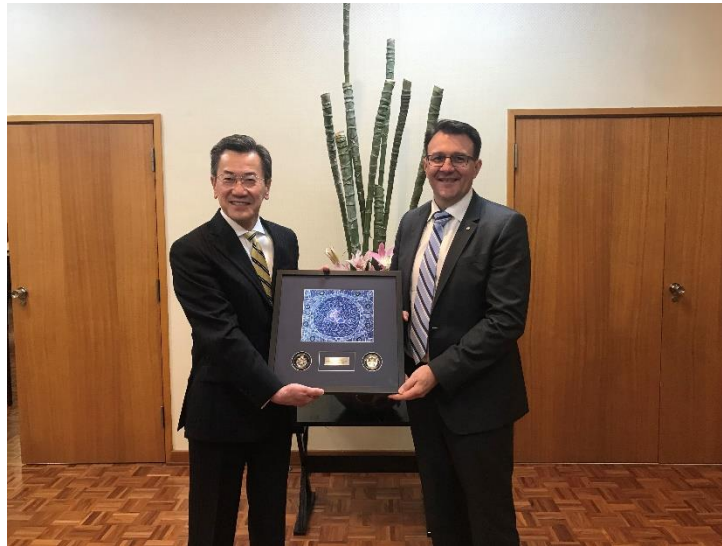


## News from under the Southern Cross – Edition27. A Police Conversation

30 August

The other day I invited Australian Federal Police (AFP) Commissioner Reece Kershaw and his wife to my Residence for a chat. So I want to use this occasion to talk about the police.



A commemorative photo with AFP Commissioner Kershaw

### **1. The Top of the Australian Federal Police**

There are police forces in every state throughout Australia. AFP unites all of these state-level police forces at the federal level. While engaging in transnational criminal investigations and international cooperation, they are also responsible for public security in the Australian Capital Territory where Canberra is located.

As such, the safety and security of around 100,000 Japanese citizens living throughout Australia could not be assured without co-operation with the AFP. They also work in close co-operation with National Police Agency of Japan in dealing with terrorism, organized crime, and drug-related crimes.

They are also the ones that ensure our safety when major events are held at the Embassy and Residence.

### **2. My experience being seconded to the police**

With all this as a background, I invited Commissioner Kershaw to my Residence to not only express my gratitude for all of the everyday co-operation we receive from the AFP but also to help us work even more closely together in the future.

But this wasn't all. For I too have served as a police officer in the past.

For 2 years, from 2007 to 2009, I was seconded from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the National Police Agency where I was then assigned to the Ibaraki Prefectural Police. There I served in the No.2 position as Director General, Police Administration Department, within the Prefecture Police.

As the one who has this work history, together with Counsellor Tani, who himself was seconded from the National Police Agency to the Embassy, I very much looked forward to talking with Commissioner Kershaw on his first visit to the Japanese Ambassador's Residence.



(L) Me during my time with the Ibaraki Prefecture Police



(R) The Ibaraki Prefecture Government Office

### **3. Shared struggles**

As the conversation progressed, similarities between Japan and Australia began to emerge one after another.

No matter what the country, the public trust in the police is higher than that in the general public servant. At the same time, apart from obvious activities like crime investigations and traffic control, it is not always the case that the general population can comprehend what the police actually do.

The other day Commissioner Kershaw gave an address to the National Press Club, which came a week after my own address to the same Club. It appears to have been driven in part by a need to increase understanding of the AFP's work within Australia. In order to prevent undue interference from abroad, it is essential to liaise not only with intelligence agencies like the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) but also with other police agencies. In his address, Commissioner Kershaw explained that both agencies work in close co-operation with each other.

I myself was in charge of public relations while with the Ibaraki Prefecture Police, where I had a tough time dealing with scandals. As a law enforcement agency, we must meet higher standards while also being subject to the scrutiny of public opinion. Our conversation also became lively with such talk of hardships.



AFP officers on the job (Source: 2017 Australian Federal Police)

#### **4. The heavy weight of responsibility**

Something that I felt while working for a police is “常在戦場 (Jo-zai Senjou)” (Always prepare yourself as if you were on the front line). You have to be ready to react immediately no matter when an incident occurs. That sense of responsibility and the stifling pressure that comes with it is something that people in the police profession share across borders.

Even a hastily-made policeman such as myself, after finishing my role in Mito (the capital of Ibaraki Prefecture) with the Prefecture Police, I remember as if it were yesterday the relief from the burden and the inexplicable feeling of freedom that enveloped me as soon as I crossed the Tone River and left Ibaraki Prefecture behind me (I compiled my recollections of my time with the Prefecture Police Force in the attached article from the Nikkei Shimbun’s ‘交遊抄 (Koyu-sho)’ (\*) column dated 24 June 2020. You can read this at the end of this article).

If the talk we had at my Residence allowed Commissioner Kershaw to be released from the pressures of his everyday work for a while, then I am happy.

## 5. An important pillar for Japan-Australia co-operation

Police co-operation is an important pillar for co-operation between our two countries, who share fundamental values such as the rule of law and democracy and strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region. Even though I've taken off my uniform, I will do my utmost to create the right environment for both sides, recalling the mottos of those times and the dedication and sacrifice of those Japan and Australian police officers who diligently continue to serve on the front line of public security 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

YAMAGAMI Shingo

Koyu-sho	The Samurai of Mito	YAMAGAMI Shingo
		<p>“Director General, Sir, don't worry. The Ibaraki Prefectural Police don't stab you from the back”. These were the words of welcome greeting that I received from one of senior and seasoned police officers upon arriving in Mito after being seconded to the National Police Agency. Even though these remarks sounded unease and were uncouth to me as a Tozama (which refers to an outsider in the Edo era), it was an oath of these samurai that they wouldn't pretend and undermine me.</p> <p>“Our uniform is our pride. As a Director, please wear it every day”. Thereafter every day in the Prefectural Police started with me changing into my uniform, giving salutes, and learning about firearms. One of my 'instructors' at the time was Mr. HARADA Tetsuya. He is now Chief of Criminal Investigations. We're the same age and shared the same sentiment towards our country.</p> <p>Incidents of random attacks resulting in death and injury, suspects fleeing while under interrogation, detainee valuables being stolen – the strong backlash against the Prefectural Police went on and on. So we worried together, acted together, and cried together. After all, I learned the dedication, perseverance and pride of police officers who put their own physical safety at risk on the front line to protect the public security. Afterwards when I was leaving as a minister to the Embassy of Japan in the UK, I was given some words of farewell at Narita International Airport “We'll take care of the murder investigations and the Yakuza. You go fight on the diplomatic front”.</p> <p>More than 10 years have passed since then. Every year I visit Mito, enticed by the aroma of plum blossoms. There what I enjoy is talking with a group of samurai and drinking Ibaraki's famous sake, all of which Mr. Harada arranges. The other day I told them about a conversation that occurred when I was introduced to Prime Minister Abe by Foreign Minister Motegi, who thoughtfully said “This is the man most suited to wearing a uniform in all of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs”. That elicited a laugh as all of them broke into smiles and nodded their heads in agreement. So in a little way I was able to repay my debt of gratitude to those samurai. (YAMAGAMI Shingo – Director-General, Economic Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Nikkei Shimbun 24 June 2020</p>

\* Koyu-sho is a column at the cultural section on the final page in the Nikkei Shimbun's weekday morning edition. It is an essay style reading where a celebrity from various fields who represents Japan writes about his or her memoir with close relationships.