



## MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION, MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

SENATOR THE HON AMANDA VANSTONE

## MINISTER FOR JUSTICE AND CUSTOMS

SENATOR THE HON CHRIS ELLISON

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### NEWS RELEASE

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E037/05

3 April 2005

#### **Indonesian Police stop people smuggling mission to Australia**

An Indonesian National Police (INP) operation has successfully disrupted a suspected organised people smuggling syndicate and prevented a group of Suspected Unlawful Non-citizens from being sent to Australia, the Minister for Immigration, Senator Amanda Vanstone and the Minister for Justice and Customs, Senator Chris Ellison announced today.

The group of 14 passengers, suspected of being from Pakistan and Afghanistan, was due to sail from the port of Lampung in Southern Sumatra to Australia when Indonesian police made their move.

Over the two days of 31 March and 1 April 2005, the INP detained 14 people who were due to take part in the trip.

The INP has also identified a vessel which they believe was to be used to transport the illegal immigrants.

Australian Federal Police and Department of Immigration officials have been in southern Sumatra cooperating with the INP operational team.

The INP suspects that this venture was being planned by a well organised people smuggling syndicate.

Senators Vanstone and Ellison expressed the Australian Government's appreciation of the INP's continued strong commitment to combating this transnational crime.

The INP's commitment is vital in reinforcing the strong message that would-be passengers should not put their lives in the hands of people smugglers on such risky journeys.

Senators Vanstone and Ellison said that since 2000, the AFP-DIMIA People Smuggling Taskforce has been working with Indonesian authorities to disrupt the activities of people smuggling groups across the Archipelago.

The Taskforce continues to assist through a number of avenues including through the bilateral sharing of information.

This has been part of a whole of government campaign to deter people smuggling activities and protect Australian interests.

Since December 2001 only two Suspected Illegal Entry Vessels (SIEV's) have successfully arrived on Australian shores.

This represents a significant reduction in people smuggling activities since the peak of activity in 1999-2000 when 75 SIEV's arrived in Australia.

During the two financial years of 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 over 4000 suspected unlawful non citizens arrived in Australia by boat each year.

As well as assisting our international partners to combat this problem offshore, the AFP has arrested a number of people and charged them with Australian people smuggling offences.

This includes six people, arrested since October 2001, who police believe to be high level organised people smugglers. These are Keis Asfoor, Ali Al Jenabi, Hasan Ayoub, Masood Chaudhry, Khaleed Daoed and Mehmet Seriban.

Australian authorities also provided vital assistance to the successful prosecution of Abu Quassey in Egypt who was the organiser of the vessel known as the SIEV X.

Investigations are continuing in Indonesia.

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