

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

**Question No. 147**

**Senator Heffernan asked the following question following the hearing on 27 May 2009:**

An incident occurred at the Sydney International Terminal late on Tuesday night (31 March 2009). A group of about a dozen men of Middle Eastern appearance were following two women and entered a restricted zone, the passport clearance area. They were approached by a female Customs Officer who asked them to leave. The men got abusive and threatening. One of them grabbed her by the arm and shouted abuse at her. Another picked up several bollards and threw them (customs contacts say they were thrown at the officers, an official Customs statement says they were thrown in no general direction). Several other Customs Officers then ran over to help. There was further verbal altercation, before the group ran out, through the terminal general area and into the car park. The incident was over in minutes. By the time the AFP officers had arrived, the group had gone.

- a) I understand from the Customs Officers Association they were angry and disappointed with AFP response times and questioned the nature of security structure at the airport, AFP stated it was an insignificant incident, could AFP supply the Committee with a copy of the incident report?
- b) If the AFP cannot supply a report, could you secure a copy of the incident report from Customs?

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

The incident referred to is under active investigation, therefore the Australian Federal Police (AFP) cannot release any operational incident reports in relation to this matter.

The AFP responded to a disturbance at Sydney Airport International Terminal on 31 March 2009. AFP officers were notified of the incident thirteen minutes after it initiated and arrived on scene within three minutes of that notification. By this time the alleged offenders had left the scene.

The AFP provided a media release on 8 April 2009, refuting media reporting that it failed to respond in a timely or adequate manner in relation to this incident.