

# A Transatlantic Exchange of Knowledge and Culture

## My IPA Scholarship Journey to Washington, D.C.

*By Sandra Smith CMgr FCMI, IPA Scholarship Recipient*

My journey began long before I boarded my flight to the United States. As someone committed to continuous professional development, I spent months applying for conference opportunities in Canada, Atlanta, New Zealand, and Australia. Despite my enthusiasm, responses were slow to come, and I grew increasingly nervous about missing out on a valuable opportunity to grow professionally. Thankfully, I persisted and that persistence paid off.

As a proud IPA scholarship recipient, I had the distinct honour of travelling to **Washington, D.C.**, to attend a professional and cultural conference that has deeply impacted both my personal and professional life.



**Photo 1 Conference Invite**

## Purpose and Vision

The purpose of this journey was clear: to engage with Washington D.C. law enforcement professionals, observe best practices in policing, and foster international cooperation built on shared values of service, integrity, and mutual respect. The experience turned out to be not just enriching but truly transformative.

Representing both the values of the IPA and my home country, I explored the operational frameworks of American policing and gained insight into how international dialogue can help address common challenges in modern law enforcement.

## Trip Timeline: October Highlights

### **October 1** – *Arrival & Rest*

Welcome to Washington!

### **October 2** – *African American Museum & Lunch*

A profound cultural experience, followed by a delicious shared meal.

### **October 3** – *Meet the Chief of UMPD & Campus Tour*

A valuable exchange with the University of Maryland Police Department.

### **October 4** – *Football Game & Bowie State University Tour (HBCU)*

A vibrant college experience and a deeper look at an important historical institution.

### **October 5** – *Worship at First Baptist Church of Glenarden & Dinner with Some of* Spiritual enrichment followed by heartfelt conversations with the community

### **October 6** – *Conference Day & Departure*

A final day of learning, sharing, and saying goodbye to new friends and partners.

## Professional Highlights: Bridging Borders Through Learning

When I arrived in Washington D.C.(US), it was in day one of 'lockdown' from the effects of what was currently happening in the federal government shutdown that started on the 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2025, due to lack of funding. Some buildings were closed or operating minimally.

During my stay in Washington, I had the privilege of visiting several key institutions:

### DAY 2 - African American Museum

The National Museum of African American History and Culture(**NMAAHC**) is a Smithsonian Institution Museum located on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. It is dedicated to documenting and showcasing the rich and complex history, culture, and contributions of African Americans. Opened to the public in 2016, the museum features a wide range of exhibits that cover topics such as slavery, the Civil Rights Movement, African American achievements in the arts, sports, politics, military service, and more.

The museum's architecture and design reflected African and American cultural elements, with a distinctive bronze-coloured exterior inspired by traditional African art. Inside, visitors can explore thousands of artifacts, photographs, and interactive displays that provide a powerful and immersive journey through centuries of African American life. The NMAAHC serves not only as a place of education and remembrance but also as a symbol of resilience, identity, and pride for the African American community and the nation as a whole.



**Photo 2 Smithsonian National Museum of African Americans History and Culture**



**Photo 3 Smithsonian National Museum of African Americans History and Culture**



**Photo 4 Smithsonian National Museum of African Americans History and Culture**



***Photo 5 Washington Monument- Obelisk on the National Mall in Washington***



***Photo 6 University of Maryland Police Academy***

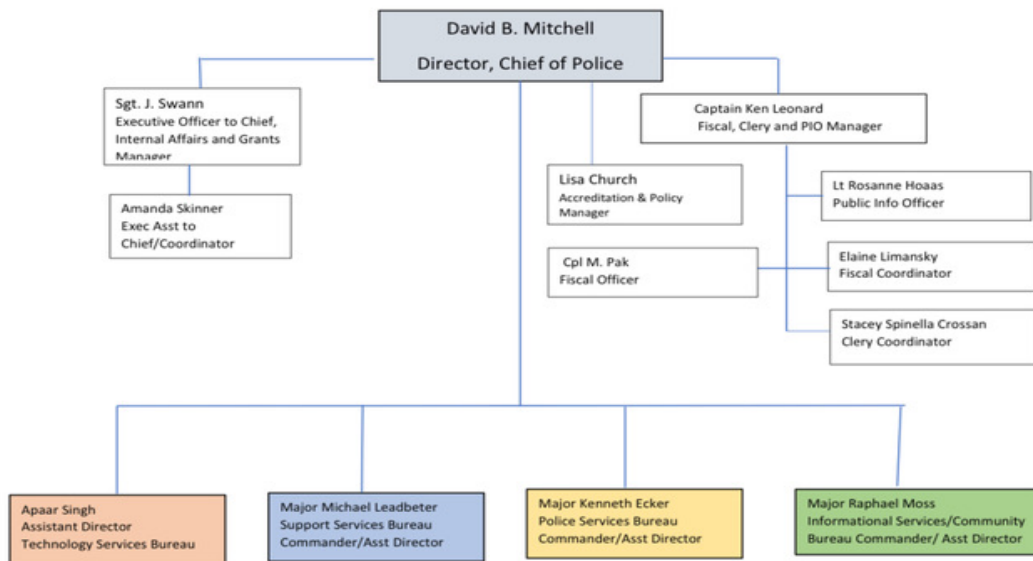
**DAY 3 - University of Maryland:**

The University of Maryland, College Park is the flagship institution of the University System of Maryland and one of the leading public research universities in the United States. Located just outside Washington, D.C., it offers a wide range of undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs across disciplines such as engineering, business, journalism, public policy, and the sciences. The university is known for its strong emphasis on research, innovation, and academic excellence, with partnerships that include federal agencies like NASA and the Department of Homeland Security. Its diverse campus community, cutting-edge facilities, and vibrant student life contribute to a dynamic educational experience.

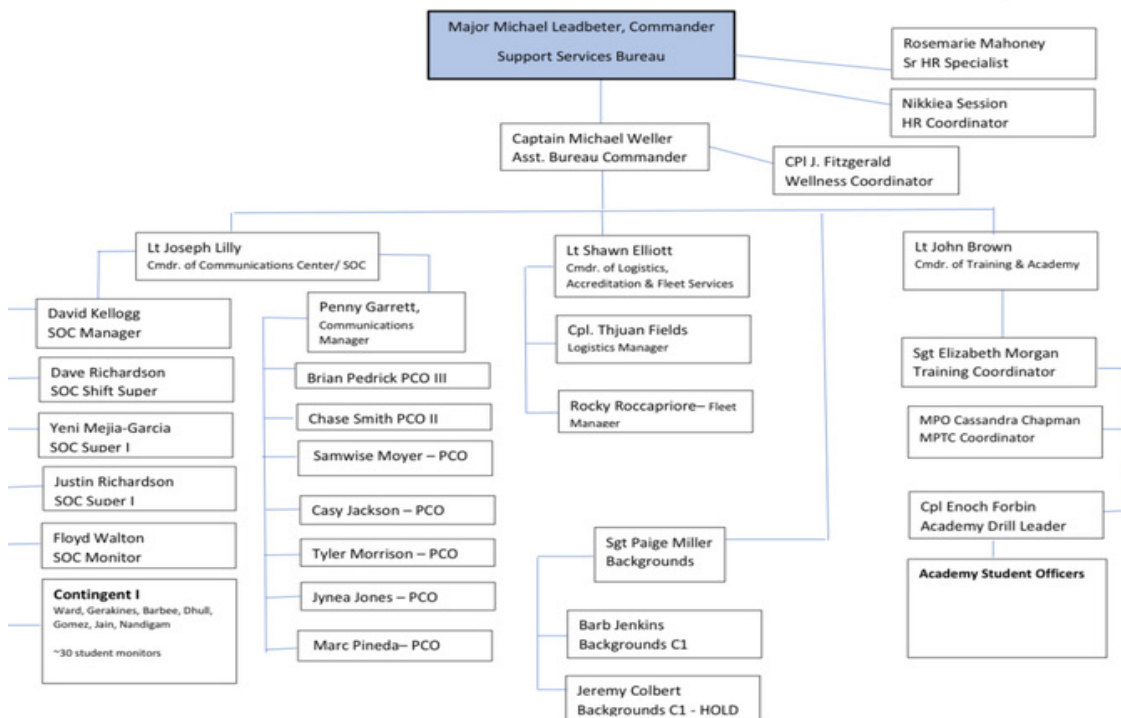
**Maryland Police:**

The Maryland Police system includes both state-level agencies and campus police departments, such as the University of Maryland Police Department (UMPD). UMPD operates as a full-service law enforcement agency, responsible for maintaining safety and enforcing laws on and around the university campus. State-wide, the Maryland State Police (MSP) serves as the primary law enforcement agency, overseeing highway safety, criminal investigations, and public safety initiatives. Both university and state police work collaboratively with local law enforcement and federal agencies, utilising modern policing strategies and community engagement to ensure public safety and effective crime prevention.

UMPD Sept 2025 1



UMPD Sept 2025 2



**Photo 7 HQ, Leadership Structure for Maryland Police**

## Cultural Immersion: Reflecting on History and Legacy

Beyond the professional engagements, Washington, D.C., offered profound cultural and historical experiences:

Each site reinforced the significance of justice, equality, and leadership values central not only to American democracy but also to global policing ethics.

Captain Michael Weller graciously took the time to lead me on an informative and engaging tour of both the Maryland Police Department and the University of Maryland. His professionalism and depth of knowledge offered us a unique perspective on the roles and responsibilities of law enforcement within both the university and the broader community. Accompanying me for the day was MPO Cassandra Chapman, who served our chaperone. She provided valuable insight into her daily work and gave me a deeper understanding of the structure and operations of the agency.

During the visit, I engaged in a valuable discussion about the differences between U.S. and U.K. policing, particularly around the routine carrying of firearms by officers. In contrast to the U.S., police officers in the U.K. do not typically carry firearms unless they are part of a specialist unit. This opened up a broader conversation about the importance of communication in U.K. policing, which is often a key element of officer safety and public engagement. I also had the opportunity to present topics such as policing by consent, the role of cultural intelligence in modern law enforcement, and the importance of promoting women in leadership roles. These discussions added depth to our exchange of ideas and highlighted both.



***Photo 8 A moment of unity and shared purpose with Captain Michael Weller Assistant Bureau Commander at Maryland Police Department Headquarters***

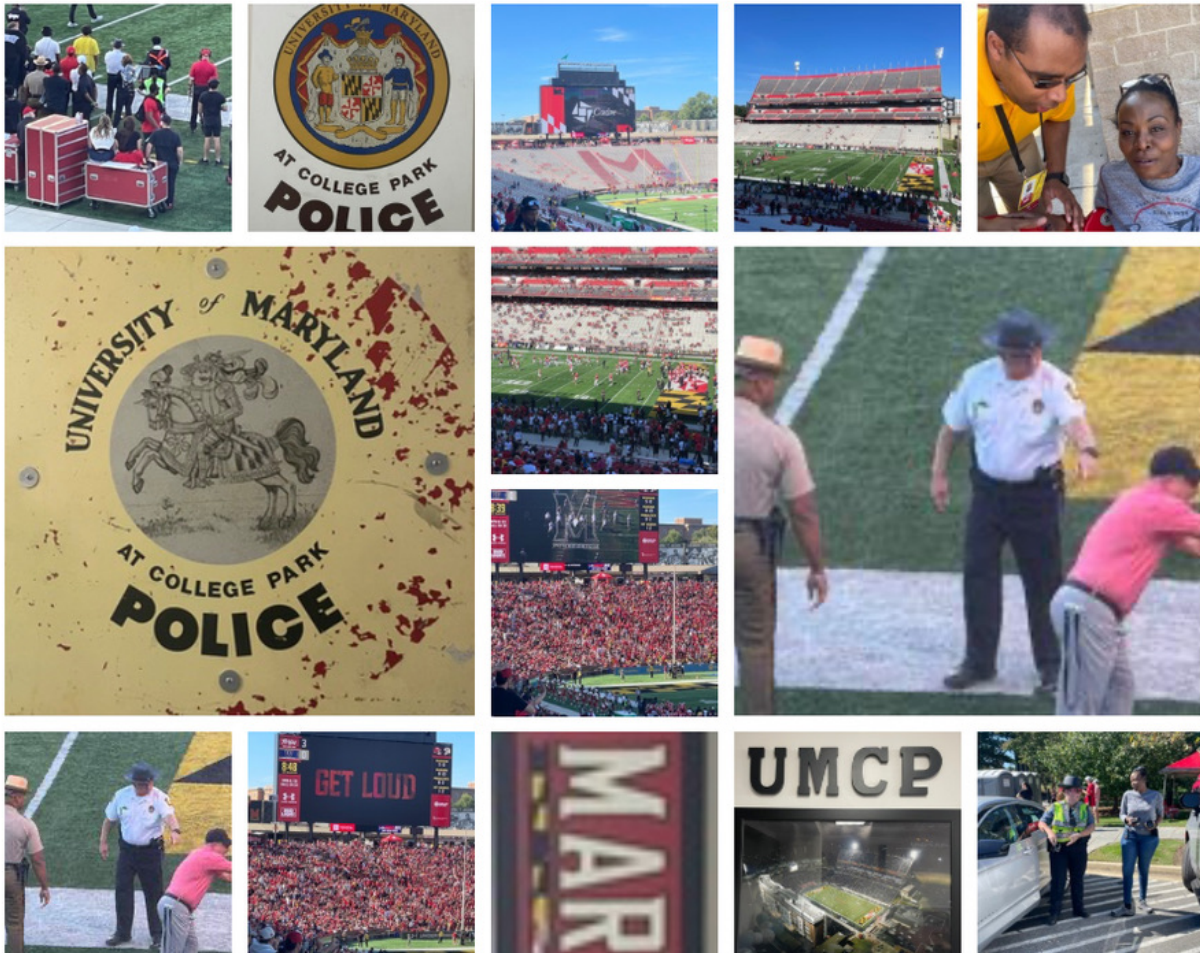


### ***Photo 9 Collection of Maryland Police Memories and Celebrations***

**DAY 4** - Maryland Terrapins football team, representing the University of Maryland, is a central part of the school's identity and a source of pride for the broader community. Competing in the NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) as a member of the Big Ten Conference, the team plays its home games at **SECU Stadium** in College Park, which regularly draws thousands of fans. Known for their spirited performances and iconic red, white, black, and gold uniforms inspired by the Maryland state flag, the Terrapins bring students, alumni, and local residents together for game days filled with energy, tradition, and community spirit.

Football games at Maryland are more than just sporting events they're cultural gatherings that unite diverse groups of people around a shared passion. Tailgating, marching band performances, and school chants like "Fear the Turtle" contribute to the lively atmosphere and sense of belonging. For the community, especially students and alumni, the games represent not just entertainment, but a celebration of school pride, resilience, and unity. Wins are celebrated across campus and beyond, while the team itself often serves as a symbol of perseverance and aspiration for young athletes and fans across the state.

I have never seen or experienced anything like this. Captain Weller is the Lead Officer for the Maryland University Football Team. I was honoured and excited to be invited to the game. So many fans, so well patrolled and managed by the Police Agency. The atmosphere was electric, colourful and fun. The music and cheerleaders were amazing.



***Photo 10 Maryland vs Washington Football Game***

**DAY 5** - I had the great pleasure of attending **Mt. Ephraim Baptist Church**, where I was warmly welcomed into a vibrant and spiritually uplifting community. The atmosphere was filled with heartfelt worship, powerful preaching, and a genuine sense of unity among the congregation. The service was both inspiring and reflective, offering a meaningful opportunity to connect with others and deepen my understanding of the role faith plays in the lives of so many. It was truly a memorable experience that highlighted the church's strong commitment to fellowship, community outreach, and spiritual growth.

I met a lady called Mrs. Posey who was going to be 85 years old in 3 days. She was a real story teller. She talked her career working for the US Government and how hard she worked to get into Leadership. She talked about 9/11 and the effect it affects her in her job which led to her early retirement. I found people wanted to talk about life, economy and faith. My time in D.C afforded me the time to listen and learning about cultural intelligence in broadening my knowledge.



**Photo 11 Community Engagement in Baltimore**

**DAY 6** - The Conference was opened by Host Assistant Chief Dr Vereen Barton of Park Police David B. Mitchell Director, Chief of Police for Maryland Police, Aisha N. Braveboy, Prince George's County Executive

The **“Women in Law Enforcement: Take Your Seat at the Table” Conference**, hosted by Barton’s Blue Line Training and Consultation in partnership with the University of Maryland Police Department, is a purpose-driven event taking place on **October 6, 2025**, at the **MFRI Academy in College Park, MD**. More than just a conference, it serves as a powerful call to leadership, resilience, and inclusive change within the field of law enforcement. Featuring an impressive lineup of speakers including government leaders, high-ranking officers, and advocates for intersectionality and disability awareness—the event is open to all, not just women in law enforcement. Male colleagues, supervisors, and allies are strongly encouraged to attend and support the movement toward equity and empowerment in policing.



**Photo 12 “Women in Law Enforcement: Take Your Seat at the Table” Conference Highlights**

## Engaging with the IPA Community

The highlight of the week was the networking and talking to IPA members who had stories about when they visited the UK and attended the COPS Annual Service of Remembrance. I took the opportunity to encourage colleagues to become members and enjoy all that the IPA has to offer.

*Photo 8: Building international friendships and exchanging ideas in a relaxed, collegial setting.*

These moments of camaraderie affirmed the IPA's mission of building bridges across borders to foster understanding and cooperation among law enforcement communities worldwide.

This visit offered a valuable insight into both the challenges and innovations shaping modern U.S. policing from mental health initiatives and community engagement to technology and policy development.

"These interactions underscored the importance of international dialogue in addressing shared challenges such as cybercrime, public trust, and cross-border cooperation."

## Cultural Immersion and Lasting Impressions

Beyond the professional conference, I also had the chance to explore some of the most iconic and meaningful cultural landmarks in Washington, D.C.

## Reflections and Gratitude

This IPA scholarship journey has significantly broadened my professional outlook and reinforced the power of international collaboration. I returned home with:

- New knowledge and insights,
- Fresh ideas to implement in my local context, and
- A deepened appreciation for the global law enforcement community.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to the **International Police Association** for this life-changing opportunity. Through programs like this, the IPA continues to build bridges across borders and strengthen ties among those who serve with honour and dedication.

## Conclusion: Returning Home, Moving Forward

This IPA scholarship journey has expanded my worldview, strengthened my professional skills, and renewed my passion for collaborative policing. I return home inspired, informed, and ready to share the lessons learned with my colleagues and community.

I am deeply grateful to the **International Police Association** for this incredible opportunity. It is through initiatives like this that we build lasting global relationships and advance a more united, effective law enforcement community.

When I was awarded an **IPA scholarship**, I was not only grateful, but invigorated. This was the beginning of an unforgettable professional and cultural experience that will broaden my perspective and deepen my commitment to international policing cooperation.

**“Servo per Amikeco” – Service Through Friendship**  
*International Police Association*

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