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33302 – JOINT OPERATIONS UNIT – FIREARMS MANAGEMENT, COMMAND & DEPLOYMENT OF ARMED OFFICERS

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1. About this policy and procedure

- 1.1. This procedure has been written to provide a clear understanding of the current arrangements for the management, command and deployment of Authorised Firearms Officers (AFOs) within the Joint Operations Unit (JOU).
- 1.2. This procedure sets out the JOU's intention to comply with the guidance set out in Authorised Professional Practice (APP) Armed Policing and should be read in conjunction with the JOU Armed Policing Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (APSTRA) and other JOU procedures outlined at the end of this document.
- 1.3. Risk Assessments / Health and Safety Considerations**
 - 1.3.1. Health and Safety legislation, in particular the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (and the legislation that extends this to the Police Service), the Police (Health and Safety) Regulations 1999, places an onus on the employer to carry out risk assessments and develop safe systems of work as part of an overall process to manage health and safety, both for staff and members of the public, where a duty of care is owed.
 - 1.3.2. Section 33(1)(a) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 creates a single offence of failing to discharge the duties imposed by subsections 2 to 7. The relevant duty in this situation is provided by section 3(1), which states: "It shall be the duty of every employer to conduct his undertaking in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons not in his employment who may be affected thereby are not thereby exposed to risks to their health and safety."
 - 1.3.3. The overall management of risk in relation to the deployment of armed police assets lies within a nationally defined command protocol as defined within APP (Command module). Principally, the key elements of this are:
 - Strategic Firearms Commander (SFC)
 - Tactical Firearms Commander (TFC)
 - Operational Firearms Commander (OFC)
 - Firearms Tactical Advisor (TA)

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- 1.3.4. The command element responsibilities are the same in each force (Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary and Thames Valley Police), with one of each in each force with the exception of the TFC. One TFC covers both HIOW and TVP.
- 1.3.5. In relation to the completion of threat and risk assessments for potential firearms deployments, this function is carried out by accredited occupationally and operationally competent TFCs. Requests for pre-planned firearms threat assessments are passed to the duty TFC or the TFC who has the working knowledge of the circumstances, having produced an earlier threat assessment that now requires review, or the individual who will be commanding the operation if it becomes a firearms deployment.
- 1.3.6. Initial or spontaneous firearms command is routinely undertaken by Force Incident Managers (Inspectors) based in the control rooms across Hampshire and Thames Valley. All Inspectors taking on this command function are qualified TFCs for the initial phase of deployment.

2. General principles

2.1. Management of Armed Officers

- 2.1.1. Daily command of armed officers within the Joint Operations Unit (JOU) is consistent in both force areas in APP compliance. Command is collaborative with a single day shift and late shift TFC in addition to a 'MASTS' (Mobile Armed Support to Surveillance) TFC working across both forces. This command structure comes under the direction of ACC Operations.

2.2. Command of Armed Officers

- 2.2.1. The firearms command operating principles are consistent across the JOU and as defined within APP Armed Policing. Deployment of Authorised Firearms Officers (AFOs) to an initial incident requiring a firearms response within the JOU is the responsibility of the initial TFC having conducted a threat and risk assessment in compliance with APP.
- 2.2.2. As with Tactical Firearms Command, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary and Thames Valley Police also have a collaborated Contact Management unit.
- 2.2.3. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary and Thames Valley Police have three Police Control Rooms (PCRs) covering the two force areas. The functions relating to firearms are primarily served from the centres at Netley, Abingdon and Milton Keynes.
- 2.2.4. The Police Control Rooms are operationally managed by a police Inspector known as the Force Incident Manager (FIM).
- 2.2.5. Spontaneous firearms incidents (SFI's) are commanded by the FIM who is trained and accredited as a TFC (initial only).
- 2.2.6. When appropriate, having deployed armed assets, the transfer of command (TOC) will formally hand over to the duty cadre TFC (see 3.3.2).

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- 2.2.7. Transfer of command may not always take place and in accordance with APP, will depend on the ability to undertake the full command functions. The FIM may retain command with oversight from the cadre TFC for continued professional development.
- 2.2.8. Firearms tactical advice is provided by AFOs of the rank of Constable and Sergeant from across the JOU firearms teams – ARV, Protection Group, Firearms Training and CTSFO's. Provision is through a combination of on duty and callout arrangements.
- 2.2.9. Ratification (in the case of SFI's) and approval (in the case of planned deployments) must be sought from the SFC at the earliest opportunity by the TFC (whether FIM or duty TFC).

2.3. Tactical Firearms Commander (TFC) Cover

- 2.3.1. TFC cover is provided by officers of the rank of Inspector and above from across HIOW and TVP. All TFCs are accredited for both initial and planned firearms command. TFCs are on duty between 0800 and midnight each day. At all other times, they operate a callout system.
- 2.3.2. The duty TFC will take command from the FIM where a deployment becomes protracted or the FIM does not have the capacity to command the incident due to excess demand.
- 2.3.3. A 'MASTS' TFC will also be available to provide further resilience to the primary TFC, in the event of additional firearms deployments.
- 2.3.4. The Operational Firearms Command (OFC) role is performed at both Constable and Sergeant rank. At all times, at least one OFC is on duty in both Hampshire and Thames Valley.

2.4. Accreditation

- 2.4.1. Chief Officers must ensure that arrangements exist whereby appropriately selected, trained, assessed and accredited commanders and tactical advisors are available to command and advise on situations in which AFOs have been deployed.

2.5. Deployment of Firearms Officers

- 2.5.1. Authorised Firearms Officers (AFO) are considered as being deployed when they are required to conduct a specific task during which the possession of a firearm, with appropriate authorisation, is a required element. This includes when they self-deploy.
- 2.5.2. Counter Terrorist Specialist Firearms Officer (CTSFO) provision is provided across the JOU and the SE Region through a combination of on-duty and callout arrangements. At all times, a minimum of 11 CTSFOs/SFOs (including an OFC) are available on callout basis.

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- 2.5.3. Where armed officers encounter a situation where they believe that the criteria for deployment of AFOs has been met, and delay in seeking authority to deploy would be detrimental to public or officer safety, officers should self-deploy and take the necessary and proportionate action in accordance with their training.
- 2.5.4. In accordance with APP; where self-deployment occurs, the AFOs should inform the police control room as soon as practicable so that an initial TFC (FIM) can be informed. The initial TFC should then assess and review the actions of the AFO in line with the National Decision Model (NDM) and determine whether continued deployment is appropriate. The initial TFC should also consider what further resources may be required and inform an SFC as soon as practicable. Subsequently the initial TFC should make the duty TFC aware of the self-deployment. The duty TFC should review the rationale and actions for that self-deployment, taking into account all available information. Incidents should be dealt with on a case by case basis. If there is clearly no failure in command and the officers' actions are deemed appropriate, reasonable and lawful it should not result in the automatic removal of their firearms authority. If the circumstances of the self-deployment are in question or there is the possibility of a failure of command then consideration for the removal of the officers firearms authority will be necessary for both further investigation and officer welfare.
- 2.5.5. The Firearms Strategic Governance Board (SGB) quarterly meeting should be appraised of the incident and any learning captured and cascaded either at that meeting or quick time from the duty TFC review if that is more appropriate.
- 2.5.6. The ACC Operations for the JOU has authorised a Standing Arming Authority for the carriage of side arms by officers performing AFO duties. Such authorisation is subject to annual review.
- 2.5.7. In all cases where AFOs have been deployed, commanders must regularly review the need for their continued deployment.
- 2.5.8. Armed support to covert operations, when performed by covert AFOs, falls into three main categories and in all cases will be in compliance with national advice around training and equipment provision:
- Armed Surveillance
 - Mobile Armed Support to Surveillance (MASTS)
 - Operations to Counter Threats to Life
- 2.5.9. The JOU operates a number of standing authorities for the issue and carriage of firearms for Close Protection, Static Protection or Counter Terrorist purposes. In each case, the standing authority is subject to regular review and renewal by the NPCC firearms lead (ACC Operations).

2.6. Authority Levels for Specialist Munitions

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2.6.1. There are different levels of authority required for the deployment of specialist munitions to those required for the deployment of traditional firearms. The key specialist munitions likely to be used in policing operations are:

- Pyrotechnics (distraction devices)
- Smoke
- Rifle
- Explosive Method of Entry (EMOE)
- Shotgun (Hatton & CS)
- Tyre Deflation Rounds

2.6.2. The following explains what tier of firearms command can authorise these forms of specialist munitions:

2.6.2.1. Initial

- TFC can authorise the use of pyrotechnics to support of Emergency Search. Self-deployment can take place where necessary but notification must be made to a TFC as soon as practicable (i.e. in an Active Shooter incident).
- TFC can authorise smoke to support AFO movement/fire and movement. Self-deployment can take place where necessary but notification must be made to a TFC as soon as practicable (i.e. in an Active Shooter incident).
- TFC can authorise use of rifle trained officers for immediate animal dispatch, although this function can also be performed by ARV officers.
- SFC must authorise use of rifle officers if needed to support an initial deployment.
- SFC must authorise use of an EMOE tactic if required to support an initial deployment.

2.6.2.2. Planned

- SFC must authorise all conventional and specialist weapons/munitions to support a planned firearms deployment.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1. This procedure applies to:

3.1.1. Strategic Firearms Commanders - Determines the strategic objectives and sets any tactical parameters. Retains strategic oversight and overall command and responsibility.

3.1.2. Tactical Firearms Commanders - Develops, commands and coordinates the overall tactical response in accordance with strategic objectives.

3.1.3. Operational Firearms Commanders - Commands a group of officers carrying out functional or territorial responsibilities related to a tactical plan.

3.1.4. Tactical Advisers - provide tactical advice in respect of the tactics

4. Other related policies, procedures, guidance and information sources

4.1. Related policies and procedures

- 33301 - JOU Firearms – Tactical Firearms Training
- 33303 - JOU Firearms – Tactical Firearms Armouries
- 33304 - JOU Firearms – Tactical Firearms Rifle Officer Critical Shot
- 33306 - JOU Firearms - Post Incident Management and Investigation
- 33307 - JOU Firearms – Tactical Firearms Armed Response Vehicle

4.2. Related guidance

- APP Armed Policing

4.3. Information sources

- Equality Impact Assessment
- National Firearms Training Curriculum (NFTC)
- Armed Policing Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (APSTRA)

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