

to do so, briefing notes or flow charts showing the structure can aid people's understanding of it.

The function of the strategic firearms commander (SFC) or tactical firearms commander (TFC) must not be undertaken by the senior investigating officer (SIO) responsible for the investigation of the offence(s) for which the firearms operation is being conducted.

The separation of SFC and SIO roles may however not be necessary during kidnap operations, prior to the safe recovery of the hostage(s) and where the operational priority is the preservation of life.

It is the responsibility of the strategic firearms commander to satisfy themselves that the tactical plan is capable of meeting the strategic aims of the operation, and that the provisions of ECHR Article 2 take precedence.

Any change of command structure should where time permits, be discussed before it is undertaken and must then be documented.

Recording and accountability

If an officer outside the command structure gives advice or a directive relating to the operational plan to a commander, then this must be recorded and this officer will be accountable for the advice or direction given.

Decision making

It is essential that objectivity and oversight are clearly demonstrated in the decision-making process. Separation of roles and clarity of responsibility is essential to the provision of effective command and tactical advice.

Tactical advice

Where tactical advice is required by a commander, this advice should be independent. The tactical advisor should be independent of the command structure and not part of the operational deployment.

Strategic firearms commander

This role:

- has overall strategic command, with responsibility and accountability for directions given
- must set, review, communicate and update the strategy based on the threat assessment and the available intelligence
- should consider consulting a [tactical advisor](#)
- should consider any [tactical parameters](#) to be placed on the police response
- must ensure that the [strategy](#) for the armed deployment is recorded, including any changes to it, to provide a clear audit trail

- early overt police action will notify the subject(s) of the covert police operation and result in reduced control and intelligence opportunities
- the longer-term public interest will be served by the activation of the tactical arrest plan at this stage.

Any armed policing operation must be planned and controlled so as to minimise, to the greatest extent possible, recourse to lethal force and risk to the public. Any command decisions which may potentially increase the short-term risks associated with the tactical arrest plan in order to reduce the long-term risk to the public must be fully rationalised and justified. In such cases commanders should seek to implement appropriate safeguards to minimise identified short term-risks where possible.

Tactical parameters

The strategic firearms commander may set or ratify tactical parameters within which the tactical firearms commander should develop the tactical plan.

Tactical parameters are set to give strategic direction, and not to develop or dictate tactics. In setting parameters, commanders should consider consulting a tactical advisor to discuss the effects of the parameters on the formulation of tactics. Where tactical parameters are set, they should be clearly articulated and regularly reviewed.

Command and operational resilience

The deployment of AFOs can result in a series of management issues. These could include:

- commanders' and AFOs' continued fitness for duty, especially during prolonged deployments
- identification of emerging stress factors
- command and operational resilience in protracted incidents
- need for mutual aid
- understanding of the interoperability and capability of supporting forces.

These issues apply equally to AFOs and those undertaking command and support roles.

The management and command of situations involving the deployment of AFOs can be stressful and often involves fast, time-critical decision making. It is, therefore, essential that officers at command and support levels, as well as the AFOs involved in deployments, remain physically and mentally capable of undertaking these duties. Forces should have processes in place to monitor officers' [fitness for duty](#).

Where, during a protracted incident or operation, officers are required to remain on duty for extended periods, consideration should be given to ensuring continuity of command and operational deployment and arrangements for providing rest and refreshments.