

articulated to all those involved in the operation and documented if practicable in the circumstances.

The function of the SFC or 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, or by any other person who is involved in the investigation.

In protracted investigations where an individual has performed a core investigative role but is no longer doing so, they may perform the role of SFC or TFC. Where this is the case the transfer of those investigative and command responsibilities must be recorded in order to demonstrate a clear separation of those roles.

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 SFC 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 approved by the SFC 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 ratify the working strategy having reviewed, and amended if necessary, the threat and risk assessment and working strategy developed by the TFC.
- must keep the threat and risk assessment and working strategy under review for the duration of the armed deployment
- should consider consulting a [tactical advisor](#)
- should consider any [tactical parameters](#) to be placed on the police response
- must ensure that the working [strategy](#) for the armed deployment is recorded, including any changes to it, to provide a clear audit trail
- must authorise the deployment of AFOs, or ratify or rescind the deployment where it has already been approved by the TFC
- should ensure that all decisions are recorded, where practicable, in order to provide a clear audit trail
- must ensure that the firearms working strategy complies with the wider strategic aims of the overall operation
- should test the tactical plan against the working strategy, where practicable and/or time allows
- is responsible for overall resourcing in respect of the deployment of AFOs
- where appropriate, will chair meetings of the [strategic coordinating group](#) (SCG) when they are held during a multi-agency or multi-discipline response
- should set [command protocols](#) where appropriate
- should consider consulting partners, stakeholders and interest groups involved (if any) when determining the working [strategy](#) (see also [development of strategy \(gold\)](#))
- should consider the need for a [community impact assessments](#)
- should consider declaring and managing the event as a [critical incident](#)
- should maintain a strategic overview
- must be able to be contacted by the TFC
- is responsible for reviewing and ensuring the resilience and effectiveness of the command structure and the effectiveness of the tactical firearms commander
- should consider the appointment of more than one TFC where there are clear demarcations geographically (ie, police boundaries), or in respect of roles.

Tactical firearms commander

Further information

[General principles of strategic planning](#)

In most circumstances the TFC will develop the working strategy, including any appropriate [tactical parameters](#). These will be reviewed and ratified by a strategic firearms commander as soon as practicable.

The tactical firearms commander:

- must assess and develop the available information and intelligence, and develop an appropriate threat assessment and working strategy for ratification by the SFC where practicable
- must consult a [tactical advisor](#) as soon as practicable
- is responsible for developing and coordinating the tactical plan in order to achieve the working strategy, within any tactical parameters set
- is responsible for ensuring that officers and staff are fully briefed

- should consider the provision of medical support
- should be so located as to be able to maintain effective tactical command of the operation
- should ensure that all decisions are recorded, where practicable, in order to provide a clear audit trail
- should ensure that an operational risk assessment is undertaken prior to deployment
- provides the pivotal link in the command chain between strategic and operational firearms commanders
- must constantly monitor the need for the continued deployment of AFOs.
- must review and update the tactical plan and ensure that any changes are communicated to the operational firearms commanders and, where appropriate, the strategic firearms commander
- should consider and, where appropriate, conduct a community impact assessment(s)
- should consider declaring and managing the event as a [critical incident](#)
- should consider the number, role and function of the operational firearms commanders
- should consider the wider community, public safety and evidential implications of the use of [specialist munitions](#), pyrotechnic devices or irritants
- should ensure that after all deployed staff are appropriately debriefed, operational and organisational learning takes place.

Operational firearms commander

This role:

- must have knowledge and clear understanding of their role and the overall aim of the operation
- must, where practicable, ensure that their staff are appropriately briefed
- should be located where they are able to maintain effective command of their area of responsibility
- ensures the implementation of the tactical firearms commander's tactical plan within their territorial or functional area of responsibility
- carries out an operational risk assessment, where practicable, prior to deployment
- updates the tactical firearms commander, as appropriate, on current developments
- makes decisions within their agreed level of responsibility, seeking approval for any variation in agreed tactics within their area of responsibility (where practicable and time permitting)
- must ensure clear communication channels exist between themselves, the [tactical firearms commander](#) and those under their command
- should consider declaring and managing the event as a [critical incident](#)
- should be available to those under their command, however, they should allow them sufficient independence to carry out their specific role in accordance with the working [strategy](#) and tactical plan

- should ensure decisions taken are recorded, where possible, to provide a clear audit trail.

Tactical advisor

A tactical advisor may only provide tactical advice in respect of the tactics in which they are, or have been, occupationally competent and remain currently proficient (see NPFTC).

This role:

- advises on the capabilities and limitations of the AFOs and other police resources being deployed
- advises the strategic or tactical firearms commander on the implication of any tactical parameters which have been set
- advises on the viable tactical options for consideration by the strategic and tactical firearms commander within the existing working strategy and any tactical parameters set
- advises the firearms commanders on the tactical considerations, contingencies and implications for each tactical option (see [National Decision Model](#))
- should be in a position to assist and advise the TFC at all stages of the operation
- assists the TFC in developing the threat assessment where appropriate
- provides tactical advice reflecting the existing threat assessment
- ensures that advice given is recorded.

The role of a tactical advisor is to advise and not to make command decisions. The responsibility for the validity and reliability of the advice lies with the advisor, but the responsibility for the use of that advice rests with the commander.

Command support

Command support is a useful element of the command structure.

Depending on the nature and complexity of the operation, and the availability of support staff, all firearms commanders must consider the availability and necessity for:

- intelligence liaison
- tactical advisor
- negotiator coordinator
- logistics support
- surveillance/technical surveillance liaison or advice
- [post incident management](#)
- media support.

Where incidents become protracted, there may be a need to establish a dedicated command facility to manage the operation. This ensures that operations do not impinge on day-to-day policing activity, or vice versa. Forces should ensure that adequate