

44. It is expected that all officers involved in the command, management and deployment of armed officers are thoroughly familiar with the APP. The accreditation process for firearms commanders, tactical advisors and authorised firearms officers (AFOs) involves testing their knowledge and application of the APP's content and principles.
45. It is clear from the notes and witness statements made by officers in this case that both the firearms commanders and armed officers were aware of and generally utilised (to an acceptable level) the concepts, considerations, processes and tactical options included in the Armed Policing APP.
46. In the introduction to the APP, a clear statement is provided indicating that the document does not seek to restrict an officer's discretion of how to manage incidents requiring the deployment of armed officers. The introductory section of the APP states:

"It is recognised that situations involving the deployment of AFOs, by their very nature, often involve a set of circumstances which are constantly evolving. Nothing within APP Armed Policing is intended to restrict police officers from taking innovative action to effectively resolve incidents in ways which are not included in this guidance."

47. However, the APP is specific in stating that where the word **must** is used that there is an expectation by the NPCC that the action referred to will be completed as set out.
48. This is articulated as follows in the APP:

"This APP Armed Policing Module does not seek to be prescriptive in terms of its content, however, where the term 'must' appears, it is to be interpreted as follows:

A police force or an individual officer is under a positive obligation in law, or that given the gravity of the issue, the inclusion of the term 'must' has been approved by ACPO Chief Constables' Council (forerunner of the NPCC), thereby endorsing the need for this action to be completed."

49. In the introductory section of the APP, there is a statement indicating that the publication provides:
- *"guidance on the appropriate issue and use of firearms and related less lethal options within the police service.*
 - *a basis for the training of all relevant police staff in matters relating to the operational use of firearms. This includes command issues at strategic, tactical and operational levels.*
 - *guidance on command structures, tactical options and operational issues associated with the deployment of Authorised Firearms Officers (AFOs)."*

Comment

115. It is clear that (at the time of the inspection) SCO7 was judged to be an effective branch. It also notes on pages 34-5 that:

“The force measures its impact on SOC primarily through reviewing operational activity and counting the number of outcomes such as arrests, money and weapons the force has seized, the number of preventative orders granted and the number of criminal foreign nationals deported. In 2014/15, MPS achievements included the:

- disruption of 171 OCGs;*
- arrests of at least 2,702 OCG members;*
- seizure of £27.1m cash, with a further £38m subject to forfeiture or confiscation orders;*
- submission of 984 firearms for forensic examination, of which 41 firearms were seized by SC&O7 and 185 firearms were seized by SC&O8 (Trident); and*
- removal from the UK of 1,797 foreign national offenders.”*

116. HMIC assessed the Force as ‘Good’ in terms of its effectiveness in tackling Serious and Organised Crime (p3).

117. Prior to addressing the Governance structure, we set out our understanding of the two Serious Crime Operational ‘Commands’ that were involved in Operation Ankaa.

SCO7

118. As stated in the SOP, the MPS Firearms capability also exists within a number of its business groups. One such business group is SCO7 and within various sub branches of SCO7 there are officers drawn from the Superintendent and Chief Inspector ranks who are accredited Strategic and Tactical Firearms Commanders. This enables SCO7 branches to provide integral Strategic and Tactical Firearms command in relation to Operations that they are responsible for.

119. SCO7 is the MPS lead Command for investigating all serious organised crime, such as kidnap, robbery, firearm/drugs supply, economic crime including cyber-crime, corruption, human trafficking and prostitution. The Organised Crime Command section deals with the proactive investigation of level 2 and 3 organised crime groups on the basis of threat, harm, risk and opportunity. This includes proactive contracts to kill, major drugs supply, multi-dimensional crime groups, including ethnically composed gangs, and serious large-scale firearms trafficking. SCO7 includes the Central Task Force and the Flying Squad.

120. In the case under review SCO7 Officers were utilised as follows:

- Strategic Firearms Commander (Flying Squad)
- Tactical Firearms Commander (Central Task Force)
- Ground Tactical Firearms Commanders (Unit not known)
- Senior Investigation Officer (Central Task Force).

SCO19

121. In respect of Armed Policing the MPS have a dedicated Firearms Command known as SCO19. The Command is responsible for providing a firearms response capability, assisting the rest of the MPS which is not routinely armed. SCO19 includes Strategic, Tactical and Operational Firearms Commanders, as well as Firearms Instructors, support staff and policy units. In the case under review. SCO19 supplied:

- A Firearms Tactical Advisor (Inspector Rank)
- Counter Terrorist Specialist Firearms Officers (CSFOs)
- Armed Response Vehicle (ARV) Officers
- Armed Officers for security and protection within the bounds of the Court.

122. The MPS governance arrangements for overseeing issues associated with armed policing are set out as below.

MPS Governance Arrangements for Armed Policing

123. The MPS governance arrangements are documented in the MPS SOP which states that:

“The Assistant Commissioner who acts as the MPS lead officer for Armed Policing and Less Lethal Weapons is supported by a Strategic Board, The APSB – Strategic Board, which will meet twice a year. The membership of the board will be determined by the Chair, but will include Senior Representatives from each of the business groups involved in the police use of firearms. The purpose of the board will be to advise and to assist the Chair in ensuring the policies, practices, tactics and equipment of the MPS provide the greatest opportunity to:

- *Protect the public*
- *Provide the appropriate Capability and Capacity to manage the risks identified within the Armed Policing Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment*
- *Promote interoperability on a national basis and across all business groups*
- *Deliver value for money*
- *Promote the professional reputation of the MPS.*