

# **An inspection of how effective police forces are in the deployment of firearms**

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# Summary

In this inspection we examined how effective police forces are in the deployment of firearms, including [specialist munitions](#). We sought to establish whether the public can be confident that police policies, structures and processes comply with relevant guidance and legislation. We wanted to determine whether the selection, training and deployment of those in command roles was effective. And to understand whether they had the capacity and capability to effectively deploy firearms and, where necessary, work across force boundaries.

The deployment of armed officers is a high-risk area of policing. In the year ending 31 March 2022, police in England and Wales were involved in 18,259 armed operations. They intentionally discharged their weapons at four of these operations.

We found officers involved in armed policing are dedicated, professional and focused on keeping the public safe. At an operational level there are good selection processes and officers are well trained and well equipped. But improvements need to be made in the selection of strategic and tactical firearms commanders (TFCs). Strategic firearms commanders (SFCs) would benefit from improved training.

The observations and recommendations that we make in this report seek to improve a national system that has good governance and structures.

There are some encouraging aspects in this report. But such is the risk in armed policing that the recommendations we have identified need to be addressed with some urgency.

## Resources and equipment

Each force annually completes an [armed policing strategic threat and risk assessment \(APSTRA\)](#). This informs the number of armed officers and commanders each force should have. All nine forces we inspected had fewer armed officers than the number set in their APSTRA. However, all nine forces had enough tactical and SFCs.

The number of [armed response vehicles \(ARVs\)](#) that each force deployed daily was at least the level the force stated it needed. But forces achieved this by changing armed officers' shifts, cancelling rest days or paying officers to work overtime.

In April 2016, a five-year armed officer uplift programme began that increased armed officer numbers from 5,639 to a high of 6,621 as of 31 March 2019. However, as of 31 March 2022, this number had fallen to 6,192.

Generally, we found forces had a good process for selecting [authorised firearms officers \(AFOs\)](#). This includes applications, pre-course selection, vetting and checks of complaint and [misconduct](#) records. But we didn't find regular complaint and misconduct checks throughout an armed officer's career. This is an omission in a higher-risk area of policing.

Forces generally had a good selection process for operational firearms commanders (OFCs) and firearms tactical advisors (FTAs). But we found that forces need to improve the selection process for TFCs and SFCs. Many who perform the role, particularly SFCs, had limited armed policing experience. Forces select many SFCs purely due to their rank. The police have a more robust selection process for public order commanders. A similar process should be used for the selection of those undertaking firearms command roles.

A small number of TFCs and SFCs undertake additional training to become specialist firearms commanders. This training prepares firearms commanders for the additional demands and potential complexities of what may be considered 'specialist firearms' operations, such as kidnaps. Some forces didn't have any of these commanders and rely on using those from neighbouring forces. There needs to be a structured process to obtain access to these commanders.

In general, armed officers had the equipment they needed to deal with most armed policing incidents. When required, they could access specially trained officers, such as counter-terrorism specialist firearms officers.

We found two other areas of concern. The first relates to the ability to track armed assets across England and Wales. All the forces we inspected had the equipment to do this, but some [force control room](#) staff didn't know how to use it. This needs to improve.

The second area of concern relates to body armour. Three of the forces we inspected highlighted an issue with the procurement of body armour. While this isn't an immediate safety concern, the scale of the problem needs to be assessed nationally. However, forces hadn't raised this with the National Armed Policing Portfolio (NAPP). This is a central team that supports the [National Police Chiefs' Council's \(NPCC's\)](#) armed policing lead.

## **Training and exercising**

We found that there is an effective governance structure overseeing the training of armed policing across England and Wales.

The [College of Policing](#) sets the standard and content of training. It licenses all forces to provide the training. A chief firearms instructor (CFI) oversees the training in forces.

All forces follow the [National Police Firearms Training Curriculum \(NPFTC\)](#) to ensure consistency across roles. Some forces place greater emphasis on certain sections of the curriculum due to local threat and risk. Despite these minor variations there is a high degree of consistency between forces nationally.

In relation to firearms commanders, we found that the training for TFCs met their needs. We cannot say the same for SFCs. We believe that the College of Policing needs to increase the length of the SFC course. Many SFCs have limited or no armed policing experience. The course provides little time for the teaching content or to practise the skills that are taught. Those tasked with commanding firearms operations are managing a high degree of risk. Forces should use training and exercising to reduce that risk. So, the training for those officers needs to improve.

All those involved in armed policing have annual refresher training and accreditation. We found that, in general, the annual refresher training and accreditation of AFOs, OFCs and FTAs was of a good standard. However, the annual refresher training and accreditation for SFCs and TFCs needs to be improved because nearly all SFCs and TFCs perform this function in addition to their normal role. We found some forces were more rigorous in their approach to this training and accreditation than others.

While there has been an increase in the number of armed officers since April 2016, the investment in training facilities hasn't kept pace. Many facilities are deteriorating. This needs to be monitored to make sure there is an improvement.

We found all forces we inspected were engaged in some form of local exercising. But there was little evidence of exercising with neighbouring forces or other agencies. Forces would benefit from doing this because at times they will need to work together.

Some of the highest-risk armed operations require senior investigating officers (SIOs) and firearms commanders to work closely together, managing armed operations involving [covert surveillance](#). However, in only one force did we find SIOs and TFCs exercising together in operational scenarios. All forces should conduct similar exercises.

## Learning

It is important that forces learn from operational deployments. We found that most forces had some form of [organisational learning](#) board. But we found limited evidence of forces sharing learning at regional meetings, and no evidence of them sharing it at the national armed policing meeting. The NAPP shares important messages with forces through circulars. Regional armed policing leads should make sure they gather organisational learning and share it in the regional and national meetings.

We found one force using [body-worn video](#) well as part of the debrief process to improve future deployments. We would encourage other forces to do this where appropriate.

## Governance

Each force has a [chief officer](#) lead who oversees armed policing. There are nine armed policing regions in England and Wales. Each region has a chief officer lead for armed policing. There is a national meeting chaired by the NPCC lead for armed policing. The force chief officer lead should hold meetings in their force and take any relevant issues to the regional meeting. The regional lead should then attend the national meeting. Despite a good structure, the process isn't being used effectively. The level of involvement by chief officer leads needs to improve.

In each of the forces we visited we inspected the armoury. In 2012, the College of Policing produced guidance relating to the management of police armouries. It refers only to training armouries and needs updating. We found limited single-user access to armouries and regular internal auditing of weapons. However, we found little evidence of intrusive senior oversight and recommend this must change.

The College of Policing's [Code of Practice on Armed Policing and Police use of Less Lethal Weapons](#) gives guidance on the appropriate use of police firearms. We found the command of armed deployments to be operationally effective and in compliance with this guidance. The SFC must agree or rescind the deployment of armed officers. We found TFCs in many forces need to contact the SFC sooner during spontaneous operations. These are operations where police don't have prior warning to develop strategies, tactics and contingency plans.

Forces use consistent terminology in armed operations. In a previous report there was a recommendation to use common, agreed terminology for armed assets. We were pleased to find that forces had implemented this recommendation. We found just two exceptions, which we cover later in the report.

Forces need to improve record keeping in relation to armed operations. As part of the inspection, we conducted a review of 70 firearms operations. For several operations, forces were unable to provide some records we requested. This was of particular concern at a senior level where forces were unable to provide the SFC logs in nearly half of the operations.

## Recommendations

We make 12 recommendations.

### Recommendation 1

By 31 July 2024, the College of Policing should introduce new entry criteria for those attending initial training for strategic and tactical firearms commander. The selection process should be similar to the process used to select public order commanders.

### Recommendation 2

By 31 July 2024, chief constables should make sure there is access to both specialist strategic firearms commanders and specialist tactical firearms commanders, through a 24-hour rota covering their region.

### Recommendation 3

By 31 October 2023, all chief constables should make sure the armed response vehicle asset tracking equipment, as provided by Counter Terrorism Policing, is available and used in their forces. They should train relevant staff in its use.

### Recommendation 4

By 31 July 2024, the College of Policing should review the content and extend the length of the strategic firearms commander course. It should make sure candidates have sufficient opportunities to learn and practise the skills of strategic firearms command.

### Recommendation 5

By 31 December 2023, all chief constables should make sure that all strategic and tactical firearms commanders have observed the firearms tactics and the use of specialist munitions they can authorise, before being operationally deployed.

### **Recommendation 6**

By 31 December 2023, chief constables should make sure that the annual accreditation process for strategic and tactical firearms commanders includes familiarisation with any new weapons systems and observation of any new tactics or specialist munitions the force has introduced or is planning to introduce.

### **Recommendation 7**

By 31 October 2023, the regional armed policing lead should share armed policing exercises with the National Armed Policing Portfolio. This would allow opportunities for learning to be identified and shared.

### **Recommendation 8**

With immediate effect, each assistant chief constable regional firearms lead should attend all National Armed Policing Portfolio meetings. If they are unable to attend, they should make sure another assistant chief constable armed policing lead from a force in their region attends on their behalf.

### **Recommendation 9**

By 31 December 2023, the College of Policing should issue updated armoury guidance.

### **Recommendation 10**

With immediate effect, chief constables should improve senior officer oversight of their armouries, including an independent annual audit.

### **Recommendation 11**

By 31 December 2023, the National Armed Policing Portfolio and the College of Policing should issue minimum standard guidance for the completion of records in relation to armed policing operations. That guidance, in support of the [authorised professional practice – armed policing](#), should include the requirement for the retention, recovery and audit of those records.



### **Recommendation 12**

With immediate effect, chief constables, through their armed policing governance structure, should make sure that all armed deployment records are stored and auditable.

# 1. Introduction

## Background

At its core, policing in England and Wales remains an unarmed service. Yet [police personnel](#) must be prepared to protect the public and themselves from extreme danger. They must be able to deal with criminals using firearms. The law allows the police, in some circumstances, to use reasonable force. And on some occasions, the police's use of force involves the deployment of armed officers.

During the year ending 31 March 2022, police forces in England and Wales (excluding British Transport Police) recorded over 14m incidents on their command-and-control systems.

During the same time period, [officers reported using force at 608,164 incidents](#). The majority of these (79 percent) related to restraining people, for example, using handcuffs.

As of 31 March 2022, there were [just under 2m shotguns and firearms legally held](#) by people in England and Wales.

In the year ending 31 March 2022, police recorded [5,752 offences involving firearms](#). These included [31 homicides and 733 attempted murders and assault with intent to cause serious harm and endanger life where a firearm was used](#).

In response to this level of threat and risk, in the year ending 31 March 2022, [police forces in England and Wales carried out 18,259 operations](#) involving the deployment of armed [police officers](#). At four of these operations police officers intentionally discharged firearms. This represents 0.02 percent of the total operations. Two of the people shot by police subsequently died. Separate use-of-force statistics show that, during the same period, [armed police officers used firearms tactics 5,435 times](#). This represents 0.6 percent of all use-of-force tactics.

In the 10 years to 31 March 2022, there were [59 incidents at which police officers intentionally discharged firearms](#), resulting in 23 deaths.

The College of Policing’s [authorised professional practice – armed policing \(APP – AP\)](#) and Code of Practice on Armed Policing and Police use of Less Lethal Weapons give guidance on the appropriate use of police firearms. The APP – AP states that the authorising officer should authorise the deployment of armed police officers only in the following circumstances:

- “where the officer authorising the deployment has ‘reason to suppose’ that officers may have to protect themselves or others from a person who:
  - is in possession of, or has immediate access to, a firearm or other potentially lethal weapon, or
  - is otherwise so dangerous that the deployment of armed officers is considered to be appropriate, or
- as an operational contingency in a specific operation (based on the threat assessment), or
- for the destruction of animals which are dangerous or are suffering unnecessarily”.

Most armed policing deployments relate to incidents involving people who police believe to be in possession of a firearm or other potentially lethal weapon.

Armed officers who deploy with firearms and those who command them are managing some of the highest-risk operations. When police shoot a person, officers are rightly held to a high degree of scrutiny. This includes an investigation by the Independent Office of Police Conduct, an inquest if a person dies and potentially a public inquiry and/or a criminal trial.

## About us

His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) independently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces and fire and rescue services, in the public interest. In preparing our reports, we ask the questions that the public would ask, and publish the answers in accessible form. We use our expertise to interpret the evidence and make recommendations for improvement.

This inspection forms part of our [Police Inspection Programme and Framework 2022/23](#).

## Our terms of reference

Our inspection examined how effective police forces are in the deployment of firearms, including specialist munitions. We did this by answering the following questions:

- How well do policies, structures and processes comply with relevant guidance and legislation?
- How effectively do forces work together operationally across force boundaries?
- How effective are forces in the selection, training and deployment of tactical firearms advisors, TFCs and SFCs?

## Methodology

Our inspection began in August 2022. We visited nine police forces in England and Wales between November 2022 and January 2023. These included a range of forces from each region in England and Wales. They included metropolitan and rural forces.

During our inspection, we carried out:

- a document review, in which we examined 450 documents, which included policies, procedures and other material;
- a total of 65 interviews and 54 focus groups with [police personnel](#); and
- an operational file review, in which we examined 70 records relating to armed deployments.

For more detail, see [Annex A](#).

## Terminology in this report

Our report contains references to ‘national’ bodies, strategies, policies, systems, responsibilities, processes and data. In some instances, ‘national’ means applying to England and Wales. In others, it means applying to England and Wales and Scotland, or the whole of the United Kingdom.

## 2. Resources and equipment

This section covers:

- the number of armed officers;
- selection of armed officers;
- monitoring of armed officers;
- competing demands on firearms commanders;
- selection of firearms commanders;
- access to specialist commanders; and
- equipment and access to specialist capabilities.

### **The number of armed officers is falling**

All forces we inspected had an up-to-date APSTRA that had been completed in line with College of Policing guidance. The document gives chief officers information about the current firearms threat and risk. It helps them to make decisions regarding the number of armed officers, how they are used, equipment, policies and training. Some also detail why they don't need certain specialist skills.

Most AFOs routinely work in ARVs. In the year ending 31 March 2022, 92 percent of armed operations involved an ARV. The primary purpose of an ARV is to provide an immediate response to firearms incidents. Many AFOs have additional skills, which means they can deal with most armed incidents. We found AFOs are well trained and equipped. Where necessary, they can call on additional specialist support.

We found forces deployed at least the minimum number of ARVs they needed.

The force APSTRA sets the number of required armed officers. In every force we inspected, we found the number of armed officers was fewer than the number the force had set in their APSTRA. Forces achieved the required number of ARVs through regular officer shift changes, overtime and cancelled rest days.

Officers who become AFOs volunteer for that role. During the inspection we consistently heard anecdotal evidence that the role of AFO was becoming less popular. Officers told us this was due to the additional responsibility and increased scrutiny of the role, together with an adverse effect on their work-life balance.

In 2016, following the series of terrorist attacks in Europe, the Government pledged to increase the number of AFOs in England and Wales by 1,000 over 5 years. The armed policing uplift programme ended in March 2021. In the 3 years to 31 March 2019, the number of armed officers increased from 5,639 to 6,621. But by 31 March 2022, the number fell to 6,192. This is the third successive year that the number of armed officers has decreased.

The Home Office needs to closely monitor the situation.

### **There is an effective process for the selection of AFOs**

In each force we visited, we found there was a structured, documented and consistent process for the selection of AFOs, managed and developed through the force firearms training department.

The process generally includes familiarisation sessions, followed by a formal written application and an assessment. The assessments are usually on the use of force, conflict management and knowledge of the law, and include a fitness test. Officers also have an opportunity to attend firearms ranges for an awareness session before initial firearms training. The selection also includes vetting and professional standards department (PSD) checks.

### **Lack of ongoing monitoring of AFOs**

AFOs have routine access to lethal weapons, and their suitability to continue in this role should rightly remain under continuous assessment.

Forces should review and renew AFOs' vetting clearance at the appropriate time. In our report, [\*An inspection of vetting, misconduct and misogyny in the police service\*](#), we recommended a shorter interval between vetting renewals.

Forces should also regularly check officers' complaint and misconduct records to make sure it is still appropriate for them to be armed. We found all forces we inspected carried out these checks before officers attended the initial firearms training course. But we didn't find evidence that forces regularly repeat these checks during an officer's armed policing career. Officers in some forces presumed that their PSD would make supervisors aware of any concerns. They thought that, due to the unique role of an AFO, their force would continuously review any complaint or misconduct allegations made against them. This was not the case. Some supervisors told us they were aware of this situation and wanted more done. For example, a senior officer responsible for armed policing said he had no confidence that ongoing reviews were taking place, saying: "PSD are not chipped right".

Given the unique duties of an AFO we believe that any adverse event or information should trigger an immediate reassessment of the officer's suitability to carry a firearm. This is to assess any increased risk to the public and the officer, or their colleagues.

## The selection of TFCs and SFCs needs to improve

There are three main command roles in armed policing operations: strategic, tactical and operational firearms commanders (SFCs, TFCs and OFCs). There are also specialist firearms commanders, who have received additional training, and FTAs. There is no requirement for any of these roles to be performed by a specific rank. For more detail, see [Annex C](#).

We found that there was generally a clear selection process for the roles of OFC and FTA. They tended to be experienced firearms officers.

In contrast, we found there was no structured process for the selection of TFCs and SFCs.

### Tactical firearms commanders

In some forces there was a selection process for both the role of initial tactical firearm commander (ITFC) and the role of TFC. But other forces gave officers this responsibility simply due to their rank or posting. For example, inspectors posted to the force control room automatically had to qualify as an ITFC. Other officers volunteered for the role to gain experience for promotion. Few ITFCs and TFCs had previous armed policing experience.

Forces should make sure those attending TFC training and undertaking the role have suitable preparation and experience. Forces should consider implementing a selection process like the one outlined below that the police use to select public order commanders.

### Strategic firearms commanders

The selection of SFCs gave us greater cause for concern. Forces select most SFCs purely due to their rank. Some officers view the role as a gateway for further promotion. Many have no or limited armed policing experience. As with TFCs, most of them fulfil this role in addition to their day job.

The College of Policing's authorised professional practice – armed policing defines the role of SFC. The role is pivotal to armed deployments. If an officer discharges a firearm, the SFC's decision-making is closely scrutinised.

We compared the selection of SFCs to the selection process used by the College of Policing for the role of public order gold commander. This role has similar strategic responsibilities to that of SFC. Officers selected for the public order gold commander course have three potential entry routes:

- Entry route A – A candidate has experience of public order as a current silver commander (this role has similar responsibilities to those of a TFC). They must observe tactics, complete online training and pass an assessment before attending the course.

- Entry route B – This is for candidates who don't meet the above requirements. They have a mentor, complete online training, spend time with the public order department observing tactics and shadow a gold commander at planning meetings and a wide variety of events.
- Entry route C – If a force wants to support an officer to attend who doesn't fully satisfy all the course requirements, they must complete an 'exception report'. A chief officer must sign the report to acknowledge that they will manage any additional risk.

This is a more robust process for selection of those undertaking this challenging role. Given the risks inherent in the deployment of armed officers, we believe that armed policing should use a similar selection process.

### **Recommendation 1**

By 31 July 2024, the College of Policing should introduce new entry criteria for those attending initial training for strategic or tactical firearms commander. The selection process should be similar to the process used to select public order commanders.

## **Firearms commanders balance competing demands**

We found that forces generally had enough SFCs and TFCs to manage firearms operations. However, most SFCs and TFCs have another full-time role. Officers told us that it was sometimes a challenge to balance these competing demands.

The role of ITFC in a control room can be extremely demanding. This was highlighted in the [Manchester Arena Inquiry: Volume 2-1 Emergency Response](#) report. In that incident, the force control room inspector, who had many competing responsibilities, including being the ITFC, became overwhelmed. Although this was an exceptional event, forces need to make sure there is sufficient support for the ITFC.

We were pleased to see that most forces support the ITFC by giving them access to additional firearms commanders. These were either in the force control room or close by. ITFCs could get tactical advice quickly.

## **There should be easier access to specialist commanders**

Most of the forces we visited had only a small number of specialist SFCs and TFCs.

The SFC course doesn't cover in detail the reasons to use a specialist commander. This is a missed opportunity. We mention the SFC course later in the report.

Forces should assess their requirement for specialist commanders in their APSTRA. We found some forces had assessed that they didn't need any specialist commanders due to having so few relevant operations. Therefore, they didn't train any commanders



for this role, relying on neighbouring forces. We didn't find a structured process for forces to obtain a specialist commander if they didn't have one on call.

We found no formal local or regional process for the allocation of places on SFCDP courses. Nor could we find a process for the distribution of specialist commanders regionally. Across England and Wales, forces could manage demand for specialist commanders through a regional 24-hour rota. This would offer greater consistency and provide resilience for forces at times of great demand. We found one example of a regional rota for specialist TFCs in the northwest region.

Due to the unique challenges of dealing with specialist armed operations, all forces should have a clear, structured process to quickly access specialist commanders.

## **Recommendation 2**

By 31 July 2024, chief constables should make sure there is access to both specialist strategic firearms commanders and specialist tactical firearms commanders, through a 24-hour rota covering their region.

## **Armed officers are well equipped**

In all the forces we inspected, we found that, in general, armed officers were well equipped. Forces were normally able to respond to all identified threats using their own officers and equipment.

Where this wasn't possible, effective working relationships with neighbouring forces enabled access to additional officers and equipment. Forces could also access specially trained officers through the NAPP and the National Police Coordination Centre. These included counter-terrorism specialist firearms officers (CTSFOs). CTSFOs receive training in a range of additional specialist tactics. They are based across England and Wales in strategically located hubs. They are completely interoperable (can operate in any CTSFO team) and available at any time to support forces where appropriate.

However, at a national level we found two problems relating to equipment that senior leaders should scrutinise, as follows.

### **Ability to track ARVs is mixed**

Previous reports have highlighted the inability of force control rooms to track armed police units from different forces. [The Kerslake Report](#) stated:

“the Force Duty Officer’s [force control room inspector’s] inability to monitor the location of responding Armed Response Vehicles and other armed personnel on a national system could easily have introduced avoidable risks to public and responder safety”.

Where a force is dealing with an armed incident near its boundary, ITFCs should be able to see the location of neighbouring forces' armed assets. This would allow them to use the nearest ARV, even if it is in a neighbouring force area.

Counter Terrorism Policing, the NAPP and the Home Office have worked hard in recent years to implement a system to achieve this. They have provided all Home Office forces and British Transport Police with the equipment. Some forces have gone further and enhanced the equipment. But in some forces, control room staff didn't know how to use the new equipment and couldn't see the location of other forces' armed assets. It is an example of the "avoidable risks to public and responder safety". Force control room staff should know how to use the new tracking equipment to deploy armed resources in the most effective and efficient way.

### **Recommendation 3**

By 31 October 2023, all chief constables should make sure the armed response vehicle asset tracking equipment, as provided by Counter Terrorism Policing, is available and used in their forces. They should train relevant staff in its use.

### **Body armour**

Three of the forces we inspected raised the procurement of body armour as an issue. An officer in one force stated: "Body armour replacement procurement is a challenge as it is nationally." Another interviewee told us that some officers can wait up to two years after becoming an AFO to receive their personal issue body armour.

We mention governance, learning and sharing information later in the report. An effective way to address the problem with body armour for armed policing is through the NAPP meeting. This would ensure a collective understanding of the scale of any problem and assist in a co-ordinated approach. This is an example of the importance of regional leads attending this meeting to highlight such issues, which we mention later in the report. However, we found no record of any force raising this problem through the meeting.

## 3. Training and exercising

This section covers:

- governance of firearms training;
- refresher training and accreditation;
- training facilities; and
- exercising.

### **Firearms training has an effective national governance structure**

The College of Policing sets the standard and content of training for armed policing through the NPFTC. The College regularly reviews this curriculum. It licences forces to provide this training and reaccredits them every four years through a detailed inspection programme. A CFI oversees the training in forces.

### **The training of ARV officers is consistent across England and Wales**

Forces train the majority of AFOs to work in ARVs. These officers attend a firearms course, which is around 12 weeks long.

All forces follow the NPFTC training modules to ensure consistency across roles. Some forces place more emphasis on certain modules to respond to local threats and risks. We found that despite these differences, officers worked effectively together. Following their initial course, AFOs attend annual mandatory training.

Most AFOs complete about 120 hours of training each year. If an AFO has any additional roles, such as rifle officer, the amount of mandatory training increases. We found that each of the forces we inspected had planned the necessary training for the forthcoming year. The training plans reflected the number of officers and the roles that forces set in their APSTRAs.

The number of training hours AFOs need to complete is substantial. Officers in most forces told us this sometimes has a negative effect on the number of officers available to staff the ARVs. We found that forces were filling shortfalls caused by officers on training by paying for other officers to work overtime or cancelling their days off.

## **TFC training**

The College of Policing mandates the content of the course to train TFCs. The length of the course varies slightly at different locations. It is mandated as a minimum of eight days for the initial TFC (ITFC) training. This course focuses on developing officers to be able to command spontaneous incidents involving the deployment of armed officers. These are incidents where police don't have prior warning to develop strategies, tactics and contingency plans. Officers become 'occupationally competent' ITFCs if they pass the course. This means they have learned the theory of commanding an armed operation.

Once the ITFC course is complete, ITFCs can, if required, attend a cadre TFC (CTFC) course. The CTFC course is mandated as a minimum of seven days. It focuses on developing officers to command planned armed operations. Officers become occupationally competent CTFCs if they pass the course.

New TFCs should complete a period of shadowing and mentoring with an experienced TFC. Once they have demonstrated they can perform the role, the chief officer responsible for armed policing approves them as 'operationally competent'. We found the mentoring of TFCs in forces was well established.

There are more TFCs readily available in forces than SFCs, which makes it easier to support others.

## **SFCs need more time to train and prepare for the role**

The College of Policing provides the training for SFCs, and everyone is trained to the same national standard. In advance of the course, candidates must complete an e-learning package and pass an online exam.

We observed part of the SFC course and reviewed the timetable. The course is five days long, one day of which is an assessment. Those who are successful become occupationally competent to perform as SFCs. Chief officers are then responsible for ensuring new SFCs develop professionally to become operationally competent. We found that, in most cases, new SFCs observe a current SFC managing at least two armed policing operations. A current SFC then observes the new SFC commanding at least two further armed operations.

The SFC course only allows limited time to implement the necessary level of training. In addition, it doesn't provide sufficient time to exercise what is being taught. Due to the high level of risk, the length of the course needs to be increased. During our inspection this was discussed with the course lead. After our fieldwork finished, the College of Policing told us they had submitted a proposal for the length of the course to be increased.

As described above, cadre TFCs receive a minimum of 15 days initial training. We have already recommended a change to the selection process for firearms commanders. If forces adopt this, most officers attending the SFC course would have increased experience of firearms operations.

#### **Recommendation 4**

By 31 July 2024, the College of Policing should review the content and extend the length of the strategic firearms commander course. It should make sure candidates have sufficient opportunities to learn and practise the skills of strategic firearms command.

### **Improved annual refresher training and accreditation would benefit SFCs and TFCs**

In general, we found the annual refresher training and accreditation of AFOs, OFCs and FTAs is structured and consistent. This includes the NPFTC-mandated training. The CFI reviews this annually.

But we found a lack of consistency in the ongoing training and annual accreditation of SFCs and TFCs. This needs to improve.

The College of Policing's authorised professional practice – armed policing states that:

“Commanders at all levels and tactical advisors must undergo annual commander/tactical advisor refresher training. This process must consist of the relevant approved national annual command or tactical advisor refresher package, supplemented by additional local training which supports force and regional issues identified in the force's armed policing strategic threat and risk assessment (APSTRA).”

All the forces we inspected had some form of ongoing training and accreditation for both SFCs and TFCs. However, the quality of this varied considerably. In some forces, the SFC or TFC needed to provide only 2 examples of operations they had commanded in a 12-month period. The armed policing lead reviews these. In many forces this could be two relatively straightforward operations. There was no assessment of the complexity of the operations. This, alongside two days of refresher training each year, fulfilled the annual accreditation process.

In other forces, the armed policing lead and the CFI had more robust annual accreditation processes. These included:

- a peer review of at least two different types of armed policing operation;
- consideration of complexity of the operations submitted for accreditation;
- attachment to counter-terrorism specialist firearms officer hubs;

- shadowing and mentoring;
- mandatory attendance at training to view tactics and use of specialist munitions; and
- annual training on the handling of sensitive intelligence.

All force leads should adopt a similar approach.

## **As part of initial training, firearms commanders should observe specialist munitions and tactics being used**

The Code of Practice on Armed Policing and Police use of Less Lethal Weapons defines specialist munitions as:

“devices or munitions used by law enforcement personnel for the purpose of gaining a tactical advantage. For example, distraction devices or breaching rounds, which are used to facilitate entry to a building.”

Firearms commanders told us they were confident in authorising the use of specialist munitions with the support of an FTA. The deployment of specialist munitions remains rare. Based on data we collected from 30 forces in England and Wales, between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2022, police used specialist munitions in 0.2 percent of armed incidents. However, it is vital that firearms commanders have good practical knowledge of specialist munitions and firearms tactics. Before being operationally deployed they should have observed the munitions and tactics that they can authorise operationally being used in training.

### **Recommendation 5**

By 31 December 2023, all chief constables should make sure that all strategic and tactical firearms commanders have observed the firearms tactics and the use of specialist munitions they can authorise, before being operationally deployed.

## **Opportunities to develop are being missed**

Most forces told us they provided opportunities for SFCs and TFCs to observe armed officers practising tactics and using specialist munitions. These opportunities weren't mandatory, and most forces told us that commanders didn't usually attend. One firearms instructor stated: “Trying to get commanders in is like kicking water uphill.”

There may be many reasons for this. Most firearms commanders undertake these roles in addition to their day job. Senior managers need to support them to develop in their role as firearms commander. In some forces this wasn't the case. A firearms commander told us their manager stipulated that they had to do TFC work in addition to their 40-hours-a-week day job.

The annual accreditation process for firearms commanders needs to improve.

### **Recommendation 6**

By 31 December 2023, chief constables should make sure that the annual accreditation process for strategic and tactical firearms commanders includes familiarisation with any new weapons systems and observation of any new tactics or specialist munitions the force has introduced or is planning to introduce.

## **Training facilities are deteriorating**

The Government invested in the number of armed officers and equipment. But firearms training facilities haven't benefitted from similar investment. These facilities include firearms ranges and buildings in which officers train and practice tactics.

Over half of the forces we inspected identified in their APSTRAs that their firearms training facilities were failing or deteriorating. Officers reiterated this in interviews. Many told us that the facilities no longer met their needs. As a result, some officers are travelling long distances to get to suitable venues. These include venues in neighbouring forces or on military bases. Some officers told us they had to travel over three hours in addition to an eight-hour training day. This incurs extra costs and extends the officers' working hours. As mentioned previously, AFOs complete a significant amount of mandatory training. A lack of facilities makes it harder for them to achieve this.

The NAPP, with the Home Office, needs to closely monitor this situation. Training facilities across England and Wales need improvement to train the necessary number of armed personnel.

## **Exercising with neighbouring forces could be improved**

We found some exercising is taking place within forces. This includes:

- working with other emergency services and the military;
- practising the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles](#) response; and
- responding to a terrorist incident.

However, there was little evidence of exercising between neighbouring forces and with non-Home Office forces, including British Transport Police, the Civil Nuclear Constabulary and the Ministry of Defence Police. We found non-Home Office forces weren't always aware of exercises taking place in local forces. Forces should do more to incorporate non-Home Office forces into exercise programmes. In times of significant national demand, non-Home Office forces may have to work directly with

Home Office forces. Forces exercising together will improve their ability to work together at those times.

Most forces review their exercise timetable at their force and regional armed policing meetings. But they rarely share this information at the NAPP meeting. Forces and regions should share planned exercises at this meeting. This will give forces better opportunities to practise working together and share learning. The NAPP should co-ordinate and share any learning identified from these exercises. This will all serve to better mitigate risk through training and exercising.

### **Recommendation 7**

By 31 October 2023, the regional armed policing lead should share armed policing exercises with the National Armed Policing Portfolio. This would allow opportunities for learning to be identified and shared.

## **SIOs and firearms commanders should exercise together**

Some of the highest-risk armed operations are when police intercept armed criminals committing serious offences, such as armed robbery and supplying firearms. Often there is insufficient evidence to arrest those involved prior to the major offence. These operations sometimes include covert surveillance. SIOs usually run the investigation of such offences. The SFC and TFC must not be actively involved in the investigation. This is to balance public safety against the need to gather evidence.

We found that firearms commanders and SIOs were aware of the need to separate these roles. In our operational file review, we found no evidence of the same officer performing the role of SIO and firearms commander.

Although the separation of roles is important, these types of operation require SIOs and firearms commanders to work closely together and to fully understand each other's responsibilities. Many of the recent inquests and public inquiries into fatal police shootings have involved this type of operation. In only one force did we find SIOs and TFCs exercising together in operational scenarios. We believe this is good practice and encourage other forces to conduct similar exercises.



## 4. Learning

This section covers:

- debriefs; and
- organisational learning.

### **Debriefs usually take place after an armed operation**

The purpose of a debrief is to identify good practice and areas for improvement, to support organisational learning. The College of Policing's [authorised professional practice – briefing and debriefing](#) sets out the expectation and the benefits of briefing and debriefing.

Debriefs should be documented, auditable and lead to improvements. It is important that all those involved in armed deployments have an opportunity to contribute.

In each of the forces we inspected, personnel told us that they complete debriefs after the deployment of armed officers. They said debriefing ranged from a documented debrief to a short verbal debrief with no formal record of what was discussed. Interviewees told us that they felt confident they could raise any concerns during a debrief.

But from our operational file review, we found that the level of debriefing varied substantially. Forces could only provide evidence of a debrief in two thirds of cases we reviewed. In these, they identified only limited learning opportunities. The review found the officers completed the debrief forms only as a matter of course and didn't use them effectively. We found that not all teams involved in operations took part in debriefs.

Nevertheless, in one force we saw a good example of a debriefing process. As part of the debrief, officers review the body-worn video to refine tactics and improve deployments. Those involved felt this was a positive step.

Forces need to hold debriefs and encourage organisational learning and the sharing of best practice. All forces should adopt the above process and regularly review body-worn video as part of the debrief where appropriate. This is particularly important where officers have used force.

## Forces need to share organisational learning nationally

Learning from armed deployments, good and bad, can positively inform changes to the NPFTC, authorised professional practice – armed policing and, on occasion, the Code of Practice on Armed Policing and Police use of Less Lethal Weapons.

Armed policing debriefs help forces learn of emerging threats and risks. With this knowledge, forces can prepare their officers to respond to armed incidents with the correct skills.

We found most forces we inspected had an organisational learning board. Attendees discuss national and local learning at these meetings and set actions. We found some good examples of sharing learning through monthly newsletters.

But we found forces rarely shared learning outside their force areas. We examined records from the NAPP meetings that took place between 2020 and 2022. We found no evidence of forces or regions sharing organisational learning with the national team. Regional armed policing leads need to raise challenges and learning through this national meeting to benefit armed policing nationally. We highlight the attendance at this meeting later in the report.

The NAPP regularly sends out national circulars to all forces with important updates. We found all forces had a system for effectively sharing this information.

We were pleased to see that forces have implemented previous recommendations relating to armed policing from public inquiries and our reports. The NAPP has been instrumental in co-ordinating these improvements. The NAPP could have a similar positive effect if forces improved the sharing of information with it. We make a recommendation below about senior officer attendance at the national meeting. This is a good forum for sharing organisational learning.

## 5. Governance

This section covers:

- force engagement with national governance;
- management of armouries;
- armoury guidance;
- approval of weapons;
- operational command of armed deployments;
- terminology; and
- record keeping.

### **Force engagement with national governance needs to improve**

We found that there is a good governance structure from a national to force level. But the system isn't used effectively.

Every police force has a lead officer who oversees armed policing, normally of assistant chief constable rank. The lead officer should hold a regular meeting in force to review all aspects of armed policing. There are nine regional armed policing areas in England and Wales. Each of these regions has a regional lead officer who holds a meeting, normally quarterly, that each of the force lead officers should attend.

The NPCC lead for armed policing chairs the NAPP governance meeting three times a year. The regional leads, along with those from non-Home Office forces, the National Crime Agency and other organisations, should attend this meeting.

Officers told us the meetings are an important way of communicating key messages to improve armed policing. However, during our inspection, one officer told us that it sometimes felt like “the pipeline is fractured”, as the decision-makers don't always attend the meetings.

We examined the attendance records from the NAPP meetings that took place between 2020 and 2022. The regional armed policing leads attended less than half of these meetings. In most cases they sent an appropriate deputy, but not always the same one. At 8 percent of the meetings, some regions didn't send any representation.

We have mentioned several times in this report the potential benefit of this meeting, if it is used more effectively. It takes place only three times a year. Attendance needs to improve.

### **Recommendation 8**

With immediate effect, each assistant chief constable regional firearms lead should attend all National Armed Policing Portfolio meetings. If they are unable to attend, they should make sure another assistant chief constable armed policing lead from a force in their region attends on their behalf.

## **Management of armouries**

Failure to make sure police firearms are stored, issued and returned safely can have tragic consequences. All the forces we inspected used the same firearms record management system to control access to armouries. All forces had a documented standard operating procedure for armoury access. Only a small number of staff in each force have permission to access the armoury alone, such as the force armourer. In March 2023, the NAPP lead issued a circular to all forces. This addressed concerns about single-user access, and removal of armoury authorisation. Most forces require their officers to access armouries in pairs.

We found that police weapons, ammunition and specialist equipment were secure. There is a computerised system for booking weapons in and out. The system will allow AFOs to book out only weapons for which they have accreditation. If an officer doesn't return a weapon in the correct timeframe, a notification is sent to supervisors or force armourers for checks to be completed.

Forces service operational weapons in line with manufacturers' schedules and force policies. But in one force we visited we found it hadn't serviced some training weapons in line with requirements. In another, we found a force armourer was unaware that officers were using paper records to record the issue of operational weapons due to a firearms record management system failure. In both instances, the forces concerned quickly rectified the problem as a result of our inspection.

## **Armoury guidance needs updating**

The most recent College of Policing guidance relating to the management of police armouries was issued in 2012. It referred only to training armouries. Generally, forces applied this guidance to operational armouries as well. The guidance doesn't reflect developments in armouries' systems, for example, digitised records and electronic access controls.

All the forces we inspected described a process for the audit of force armouries. This included daily, weekly, monthly and annual reports, or full audits. While we found that compliance with the audit schedule was discussed at the forces' strategic governance meetings, we found little evidence of senior or chief officers testing those reports. Chief officers place significant trust in individuals engaged in armoury management. There is a fine balance between empowering individuals and overbearing management. But, given the risks in the management of armouries, senior officers must test that trust more often.

In the forces we inspected we found no evidence of external or independent audits of armouries, as recommended in the guidance. We are aware of one force, not included in our inspection, that used a local authority audit team to check its armoury. Likewise, force armed policing leads need to make sure they have rigorous audit processes. By arranging an independent annual audit, they could make sure their management systems are working effectively.

### **Recommendation 9**

By 31 December 2023, the College of Policing should issue updated armoury guidance.

### **Recommendation 10**

With immediate effect, chief constables should improve senior officer oversight of their armouries, including an independent annual audit.

## **The NAPP and the Home Office approve police operational weapons**

All weapons systems and munitions the police use must have approval before forces can deploy them operationally.

An approval process is now in place between the NAPP and the Ministry of Defence's Defence Science Technology Laboratory (DSTL). This is documented in the Code of Practice on Armed Policing and Police use of Less Lethal Weapons. The process has taken considerable time to agree. It requires technical knowledge that policing doesn't always have.

The process is as follows. The NAPP, with the assistance of the DSTL, creates an operational requirement. The new weapons system or munition is then submitted to the DSTL for testing and reporting, together with extensive documentation. The Home Office (where appropriate) and the NPCC then decide if they should make the weapons system or munition available to forces for operational use. At the time of our inspection, we found the process, from initial request to operational availability, taking over 18 months.

We found no forces using weapons operationally that had not had formal approval.

## **Operational command of armed deployments is effective**

In our operational file review, we found officers commanded most operations involving the deployment of armed officers in line with authorised professional practice – armed policing (APP – AP) and the Code of Practice on Armed Policing and Police use of Less Lethal Weapons. In the cases we reviewed, we saw the use of tactics proportionate to the assessment of the threat faced. Firearms commanders use the [National Decision Model](#) as the framework for their decision-making.

In order to minimise risk, it is important that commanders brief armed officers with the latest accurate intelligence. The NPCC introduced a national template to make sure firearms commanders get accurate intelligence. We found widespread use of this in planned operations. In the briefings we listened to, commanders shared intelligence accurately with officers. Briefings considered armed and unarmed officers, including [Stay Safe](#) reminders.

In our operational file review, we found that the command was effective for armed deployments that crossed force boundaries. The strategic and TFCs followed the APP – AP. They agreed who had command of which resources at what point.

Officers implemented a timely and appropriate tactical command structure in the spontaneous and planned cases we reviewed. (Spontaneous operations are operations where police don't have prior warning to develop strategies, tactics and contingency plans.) However, the notification of SFCs was less timely. The APP – AP states:

“An SFC should be contacted as soon as practicable and informed that an incident requiring the deployment of armed officers is taking place.”

In our operational file review, we found examples of TFCs informing SFCs over 24 hours after the initial authorisation to deploy armed officers in spontaneous incidents. On some occasions this was when the armed operation had ended. In these examples this was not in line with the APP – AP. TFCs need to make sure that SFCs are contacted as soon as practicable.

## **Inconsistent terminology can create confusion**

In general, we found officers used consistent terminology in armed policing operations. This was evidenced by forces working effectively together across force boundaries. ARV officers and firearms commanders used the same terms for command function and tactics, in line with their training.

However, we found two examples of where this was not the case, as follows.

## **Use of multiple terms for ITFCs**

ITFCs work in force control rooms and usually have other responsibilities as well. While armed policing is consistent in its use of the term 'ITFC' to refer to these officers, personnel who don't work in armed policing use different terms. In the nine forces we inspected, they referred to the ITFC by six different names:

- force incident manager (FIM);
- force operations manager (FOM);
- force duty officer (FDO);
- duty operations manager (DOM);
- operations and communications inspector (OCI); and
- OSCAR1.

The variance in the force control room title seems unnecessary. This may cause confusion between officers in time-critical cross-boundary armed policing deployments.

## **Use of the term 'enhanced' for firearms commanders**

A further example of inconsistent terminology was the use of the term 'enhanced' when referring to firearms commanders. We found three of the forces we inspected used the term to describe their more experienced commanders. This is not a recognised term across England and Wales. The correct terms are TFC/SFC or specialist TFC/SFC. The term 'enhanced' could create confusion as to the accreditation of the officer and forces shouldn't use it.

## **Record keeping needs to improve**

In some cases, we found elements of forces' record keeping failed to comply with the APP – AP. This states that:

“Any consideration in respect of the deployment of AFOs should be recorded along with the decision and rationale for it.”

It goes on to say that firearms commanders:

“should ensure that all decisions are recorded, where practicable, in order to provide a clear audit trail”.

In our operational file review, some forces weren't able to provide all records we requested. For 21 of the 70 operations we reviewed, forces couldn't give us a record of the briefing. In 27 of the 70 operations we reviewed, forces couldn't give us a record of the debriefing.

The APP – AP also states:

“Where a recommendation for the deployment of AFOs has been declined, the rationale for that decision should also be documented.”

We found that very few forces kept records of such decisions.

However, we found a good example of one force correctly recording and reviewing these decisions. The force used this information to try to improve consistency of decision-making across firearms commanders. It gave feedback to the relevant commanders about their decision-making.

All forces need to record the decision to decline a recommendation for the deployment of AFOs. They could then use a system as just described to develop their firearms commanders.

The APP – AP does not specify how forces should complete records of armed policing operations. We found a variety of recording methods, differing even between firearms commanders in the same force. Record keeping was most inconsistent among SFCs. In the operational file review, in almost half of these cases there was no evidence of the commander recording a reason for their decisions.

We found all forces we visited use the same firearms record management system to collate and retain the records they do hold. We also found an example of a force using a tracker system to make sure officers file all expected records against an individual armed deployment reference number. The chair of the monthly governance meeting then scrutinises the information from the tracker. But even in that case there were several records missing. Personnel told us they struggled to recover some records from commanders. This must improve. The force armed policing leads should regularly audit records. Firearms commanders' compliance with the APP – AP should form part of their annual accreditation review.

### **Recommendation 11**

By 31 December 2023, the National Armed Policing Portfolio and the College of Policing should issue minimum standard guidance for the completion of records in relation to armed policing operations. That guidance, in support of the [authorised professional practice – armed policing](#), should include the requirement for the retention, recovery and audit of those records.

### **Recommendation 12**

With immediate effect, chief constables, through their armed policing governance structure, should make sure that all armed deployment records are stored and auditable.



# Annex A – Methodology and forces visited

## The scope of our inspection

Our inspection began in August 2022. We conducted interviews with a wide range of interested parties and subject matter experts to identify the main themes and areas of concern. These were included in the inspection framework.

## Fieldwork inspection visits

The fieldwork inspection took place between November 2022 and January 2023. We inspected nine police forces across England and Wales. These included metropolitan and rural forces. They also included forces that had joint firearms units with neighbouring forces. We inspected:

- Greater Manchester Police;
- West Yorkshire Police;
- Nottinghamshire Police;
- Northumbria Police;
- Avon and Somerset Police;
- Warwickshire Police;
- Thames Valley Police;
- Dyfed-Powys Police; and
- Essex Police.

We reviewed 450 documents, which included policies, procedures and other material.

We carried out 65 interviews. In each force or region, we interviewed the:

- regional armed policing lead;
- chief officer responsible for armed policing;
- chief firearms instructor;
- senior officer responsible for armed policing; and
- force armourer.

We also held 54 focus groups with:

- armed response officers;
- tactical advisors;
- counter-terrorism specialist firearms officers (where applicable);
- initial tactical firearms commanders; and
- tactical firearms commanders and strategic firearms commanders.

## **Operational file review**

We asked the nine forces we inspected to supply the records for a total of 70 armed policing operations. These operations included both spontaneous and planned operations. (Spontaneous operations are where police don't have prior warning to develop strategies, tactics and contingency plans.) They included a range of tactics and cross-boundary operations. The records included:

- audio files of calls made to police by members of the public;
- force control room logs;
- intelligence reports;
- firearms commanders' and tactical advisors' records;
- briefing records, including audio files;
- debrief records; and
- weapons and munitions issue and return records.

We examined those records to assess compliance with the authorised professional practice – armed policing and the Code of Practice on Armed Policing and Police use of Less Lethal Weapons. We checked for things such as attendance at mandatory training and whether firearms tactical advisors provided suitable advice. We also conducted armoury checks.

## Annex B – About the data

Data in this report is from a range of sources, including:

- the Home Office;
- our inspection fieldwork; and
- data we collected directly from all 43 police forces in England and Wales.

When we collected data directly from police forces, we took reasonable steps to agree the design of the data collection with them and other interested parties such as the Home Office. We gave forces several opportunities to quality assure and validate the data they gave us, to make sure it was accurate.

Where forces were unable to supply data, we mention this in the following subsection.

British Transport Police was outside the scope of inspection. Any aggregated totals for England and Wales presented exclude British Transport Police data, so may differ from those published by the Home Office.

### **Police use of specialist munitions**

We collected specialist munitions data directly from all 43 police forces in England and Wales, though not all forces were able to provide data. The data was requested from forces in October 2022 and covers 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2022.

We then excluded data from the following forces due to incomplete data or data quality issues: Avon and Somerset, Cheshire, Cleveland, Devon and Cornwall, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, North Wales, Northamptonshire, Northumbria, Thames Valley, West Mercia, and Wiltshire.

# Annex C – Firearms command roles

## Strategic firearms commander

The SFC has overall command and responsibility for firearms operations. They set the objectives for an operation. An unarmed superintendent, chief superintendent or chief officer generally performs the role.

## Tactical firearms commander

The TFC develops and co-ordinates the overall tactical response. There are different types of TFC:

- Initial TFCs (ITFCs) take command in the earliest stages of spontaneous incidents that need an armed response. These are incidents where police don't have prior warning to develop strategies, tactics and contingency plans. ITFCs are generally unarmed inspectors and work in force control rooms. They usually have other control room responsibilities.
- Cadre TFCs take command of a spontaneous armed incident that becomes protracted or a planned operation. They usually carry out the role in addition to their day job. The ranks of inspector to superintendent, unarmed in almost all cases, generally perform the role.

## Operational firearms commander

The OFC commands a group of officers who respond to an armed incident and apply the tactics developed by the TFC. A sergeant or constable, who must be an AFO, generally performs the role.

## Specialist commander

Some SFCs and TFCs complete additional training called the Specialist Firearms Command Development Programme (SFCDP). They are then accredited as specialist TFCs or specialist SFCs.

The SFCDP prepares experienced firearms commanders for the additional demands and potential complexities of what may be considered 'specialist firearms' operations. These include operations such as kidnaps and those involving counter-terrorism.

## **Firearms tactical advisor**

The FTA gives tactical advice to the firearms commander. The FTA must provide tactical advice only in respect of the tactics in which they are trained and qualified. A sergeant or constable who is proficient in firearms tactics normally performs the role.

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