

The Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London

Our ref:TP/VS

22 August 2023

Dear Home Secretary

RE: HMICFRS Inspection of how effective police forces are in the deployment of firearms

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this national thematic inspection. Suffolk Constabulary has provided an update on the eight recommendations for police forces, which is attached and will be published on my website.

Reports on the Constabulary's Protective Services (including Roads Policing and Firearms Team) is included in my schedule of reports the Chief Constable provides, so this will be kept under review.

Yours sincerely



Tim Passmore, Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk



Response to HMIC Inspection of how effective police forces are in the deployment of firearms, July 2023

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.

Should the constabulary need to access specialist strategic and tactical firearms commanders, we are able to do so through arrangements that exist between all the forces in the Eastern region as part of a seven-force Cross Boundary Command Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for high threat incidents, sanctioned by the seven Eastern region Chief Constables in 2022. However, in recognition of the need to formalise these arrangements to ensure that there is a robust system for 24-hour cover for the Eastern region, a Section 22A Police Act 1996 seven-forces collaborative-services legal agreement is being progressed for a Specialist Firearms Commander cadre.

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.

Suffolk Constabulary, together with the other six police forces in the Eastern region, currently uses the Airbox MOSAIC system for armed response vehicle asset tracking. In 2024, the national Surveillance Situational Awareness Systems (SSAS) Project, overseen by the National Police Chiefs Council Armed Policing Lead, will deliver a national product for surveillance and armed policing across the UK. This will include asset tracking. In the interim, the Eastern Region 7-Forces Procurement team are seeking to extend the current Airbox MOSAIC contract.

There is work ongoing to ensure that Suffolk Constabulary Contact and Control Room staff are suitably trained in the use of Airbox MOSAIC.

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.

All Tactical Firearms Commanders (TFCs) and Strategic Firearms Commanders (SFCs) are mandated to attend the national annual TFC/SFC refresher training course and the annual Armed Police Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (APSTRA) refresher course. The APSTRA refresher addresses any new tactics that have been, or are likely to be, implemented and any new weapon systems or ammunition/specialist munitions that are going to be introduced. TFCs are also mandated to attend an annual training session which is part of the Armed Response Vehicle (ARV) officer's mandatory refresher training programme, during which they observe ARV tactics. As part of this training, they are required to take an active command role in a training scenario, for example resourcing a Forward Control Point.

In addition, the Constabulary is implementing a requirement for all new Firearms Commanders to undertake a bespoke session with a Firearms Tactical Advisor after they have completed their national accreditation

course. During this session they will observe footage of different tactics and will discuss the tactics that are detailed in the seven-force Tactical Options menu. This session must be undertaken before they can be mentored for operational deployment. Existing SFCs and TFCs also receive a session on tactics on the APSTRA mandatory refresher training if the need is determined by our Chief Firearms Instructor.

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.

This is already being achieved. The APSTRA refresher course that all Tactical Firearms Commanders and Strategic Firearms Commanders are mandated to attend addresses any new tactics that have been or are likely to be implemented. In addition, the course addresses any new weapon systems or ammunition/specialist munitions that have been or are going to be introduced.

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.

The Eastern Region Armed Policing Lead includes details of armed policing exercises when providing a regional update at the National Armed Policing Portfolio (NAPP) meetings, held on a quarterly basis. The agenda for the quarterly Eastern Region Seven-Force Strategic and Tactical Firearms meetings also includes an item on armed policing exercises so that relevant information can be taken forward to these meetings. The Eastern Region Armed Policing Lead is currently Deputy Chief Constable Simon Megicks of Norfolk Constabulary.

Whilst it is not directly within the scope of this recommendation, there are plans to include British Transport Police, the Civil Nuclear Constabulary, and the Ministry of Defence Police in the seven-forces exercising programme. These non-Home Office forces have also been invited to partake in the forthcoming multi-agency Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) exercises due to take place September/October 2023.

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.

This is being achieved. If the Eastern Region Armed Policing Lead is unavailable to attend the NAPP meeting, an agreement is in place that one of the four Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Operational leads from the region will attend in their absence.

Recommendation 10

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

Following recent inspections by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) and the College of Policing, the constabulary's firearms training armoury was found to have robust processes in place. All armouries in the Eastern region were inspected. This has resulted in improved processes being implemented across the region and each armoury is now subject to its own Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Good practice and lessons learnt from the inspections has been shared at the Seven-Force Chief Firearms Instructor Forum meetings.

Independent audits are conducted by a specialist business assurance provider (TIAA), although not on an annual basis. In line with Recommendation 9 of this report, by December 2023 the College of Policing will

be publishing revised armoury guidance, which will provide further direction about the independent annual audit requirement. This will be implemented when issued. undertaken annually.

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.

Suffolk Constabulary armed deployment records are collated and stored within the College of Policing approved Chronicle system. The system provides an auditable framework including individual breakdowns to support accreditation processes for Strategic/Tactical Command and operational purposes. Deployment records include the logging of officers attending, the type of incident and assets/tactics utilised. The Constabulary is currently reviewing how protracted deployments are managed with associated recording of National Decision Making assessments set alongside intelligence and are also exploring opportunities to improve recording of rescinded and non-deployment decisions.