

KATE GREEN
**DEPUTY MAYOR
OF GREATER
MANCHESTER**

Rt Hon Suella Braverman MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Date: 4th September 2023

Dear Home Secretary,

SUBJECT: HMICFRS Inspection of how effective police forces are in the deployment of firearms in Greater Manchester.

I write in response to the recent HMICFRS inspection of deployment of firearms in Greater Manchester.

Whilst recognising that the need for police forces to deploy armed officers is thankfully only necessary in a very small percentage of incidents, it is vital that in those circumstances, police officers are prepared to use reasonable force to protect the public and themselves from extreme danger. I also recognise that the public need to be confident that local police policies, structures and processes comply with relevant guidance and legislation.

I am grateful to HMICFRS for undertaking this inspection and I acknowledge the findings of the report, which includes a number of recommendations. My officials have liaised closely with senior leaders at Greater Manchester Police (GMP) regarding these matters and I can comment on these as follows:

Recommendation 1 - 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.

I have been informed that GMP have access to both Specialist Tactical Firearm Commanders (TFC) and Specialist Strategic Firearms Commanders (SFC). Regarding the TFCs, I am told that they participate in a regional rota to provide 24-hour cover, and it is worth highlighting that the northwest regional arrangements for Specialist TFC's, led by GMP, is the only such formal rota in the UK.

GMP have also reported that there currently is not a regional Specialist SFC cover rota, however, in recent deployments where a Specialist SFC had been required, cover has been provided by existing SFCs within GMP.

I am informed that work is ongoing at a national level to introduce a Specialist Command rota, similar in operation to the CT Commander rota which provides coverage on a North/South basis, rather than regional. Clearly, GMP would benefit from this arrangement.

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Recommendation 2 - 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.

GMP have reported that the Airbox system is well embedded in both their counter terrorist specialist firearms officer (CTSFO) team (the original recipients of the equipment) and in its armed response vehicle (ARV) teams. This system is used daily by GMP's ARV supervisors both for situational awareness of staff locations and for planning the allocation of staff to deployments. The system is available to firearms commanders and I am told used routinely in pre-planned deployments. I am also informed that there is access to airbox in GMP's Force control room.

Recommendation 3 - 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.

I have been informed by GMP that their initial tactical firearms commanders (ITFC) and TFCs are required to complete mandatory training which includes Viewing of tactics and specialist munitions. This training is commensurate with their respective roles.

After accreditation, GMP commanders are required to complete mandatory refresher training annually. As you will be aware, GMP is part of the North West Armed Policing Collaboration (NWAPC), and commanders who form part of that collaboration are required to attend a national training event (provided by the College of Policing) and a local armed policing strategic threat and risk assessment (APSTRA) based training event. In addition, all firearms officers must complete tactics viewing (ARV) and TFCs and SFCs also required to view Counter Terrorist Specialist Firearms Officer (CTSFO) and specialist firearms officer (SFO) tactics.

In addition, GMP in its role as a Counter Terrorism hub hosts the CTSFO teams. Members of this team also provide an input in Explosive Method of Entry (EMOE). It is a requirement of the TFC and SFC role profile that an EMOE input is given to both, and it is refreshed within four years of the previous input.

Recommendation 4 - 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.

GMP's annual accreditation process is outlined in the response to recommendation 3 above. Whilst the process does not specifically cover new weapons systems, I am informed that these would generally be dealt with within GMP by a change to the Standing Authority or to a specific Standard Operating Procedure. GMP noted that these would routinely be re-circulated to firearms commanders when significant updates have been made.

I can also update that from April 2024, GMP will be responsible for developing and delivering their own APSTRA based command refresher training. This can very easily incorporate a refresh or reminder of any new weapons systems, tactics, or specialist munitions introduced.

Recommendation 5 - 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.

As you will be aware, GMP is part of the NWAPC until 1st April 2024. After that date, GMP will continue to attend regional meetings, including Armed Policing Management Board (APMB). This meeting feeds

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into a National Armed Policing meeting and is attended by an Assistant Chief Constable (ACC). I understand that Organisational learning is a standing agenda item on the APMB meeting.

Recommendation 6 - 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.

As a member of the NWAPC led by ACC Jo Edwards, I can confirm that ACC Edwards attends the National Armed Policing meeting on behalf of the northwest region and delegates attendance should she be unavailable. As GMP transition to an independent training licence the armed policing lead or delegate will attend National Armed Policing meetings.

Recommendation 7 - With immediate effect, chief constables should improve senior officer oversight of their armouries, including an independent annual audit.

As a member of the NWAPC, GMP is governed by the "Firearms Training Armoury Standard Operating Procedure" which outlines the inspection regime for training armouries. This includes a biannual quality assurance check conducted by a chief inspector or superintendent, preferably independent of the firearms training function.

In GMP, this is routinely conducted by the Chief Inspector of Firearms Operations in conjunction with the Chief Firearms Instructor (CFI), or the Deputy CFI in the CFI's absence. In addition, the Deputy CFI conducts four-monthly audits of firearms training armouries.

I can also report that GMP has its own "Operational Armoury Procedure" document. This sets out the inspection regime for GMP's operational armouries. Whilst the Chief Inspector of Firearms Operations has responsibility for the strategic management of these, scrutiny of the operational armouries is delegated to Tactical Firearms Unit (TFU), and Manchester Airport Section (MAS), supervisors.

Whilst GMP's systems provide some independent oversight, I do acknowledge that they currently do not provide the independent annual audit as recommended. GMP is currently reviewing how this could be undertaken and will move to a position of annual audits. This issue is linked directly to relevant Public Inquiry findings. A proposal has been put forward to include these matters, which will capture armoury compliance, in the corporate risk register with a view to inclusion in the audit planning cycle.

Recommendation 8 - With immediate effect, chief constables, through their armed policing governance structure, should make sure that all armed deployment records are stored and auditable.

GMP's "Armed Policing Record Keeping Guidance" document sets out the clear responsibility for all officers and staff involved in armed policing operations to ensure all records made regarding armed deployment decision making are retained and submitted to Chronicle. The recent HMICFRS inspection team highlighted, in the hot debrief, that the systems and process in GMP are effective.

If there is anything further, that I can provide in assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Kate Green

Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester

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