

## **Justice Sub-Committee on Policing**

### **Armed police officers**

#### **Letter from the Scottish Police Authority to the Convener**

Thank you for your letter of 2 June seeking clarification on issues relating to armed response vehicle (ARV) officers overtly deploying with sidearms.

Since 1 April 2013 a Standing Firearms Authority (SFA) has been in place to allow a limited number of trained Armed Response Vehicle (ARV) officers to overtly deploy with sidearms and less lethal weapons (such as Tasers). The Scottish Police Authority (SPA) was not asked to approve this standing authorisation. This was a decision within the responsibilities of the Chief Constable of Police Scotland as it relates to the deployment of officers under his direction and control.

We are clearly aware of the recent public comment on this issue and have received clarification from Police Scotland on both the procedures being followed, and the numbers of officers involved.

Those clarifications also make clear that the approach being taken builds on existing practice within some of the legacy forces and, while this may have brought change to legacy practices in some parts of the country, should not be seen as a novel approach for Scotland as a whole.

It clearly remains a specialist activity carried out by the trained few, not a routine expectation of the many officers in our communities.

Given the emotive nature of this subject, I do think it would be helpful for there to be more information available to the public about how Police Scotland prepare, plan and train their limited firearms resources.

To facilitate that, the Chief Constable has already provided members of the SPA with an overview of the firearms function within Police Scotland and will provide input at the next public meeting of the SPA on 25 June, and will take questions from Authority members. Board members will also be offered the opportunity to receive a more in depth briefing on Police Scotland's preparation, planning and training in respect of firearms.

I can also reassure you that SPA will continue to carefully monitor any impacts or implications of a consistent, national approach to firearms deployment through the arrangements we have in place to consider risk, safety and complaints issues within policing.

Vic Emery OBE  
Chair, Scottish Police Authority  
11 June 2014