

States of Jersey Police Association
President's submission to Scrutiny Panel regarding Taser

The criminal use of firearms & similar potentially lethal weapons and the consequential dangers to Police Officers and the public has grown significantly over recent years. We did take pride in the fact we were virtually unarmed, but in response to growing risks from these weapons we have developed a sophisticated and highly trained firearms response. Any use or deployment of Police firearms should rightly receive challenges to the Police action however, despite this; the support amongst the States of Jersey PA membership for the introduction of Tasers is unanimous. I represent approximately 233 Police Officers, 28 of those are trained firearms officers. It is our collective view that Taser is the first practical and effective supplement to an armed response by Police Officers.

The UK have trialled and in some forces accepted the use of Tasers with firearms officers and my colleagues from the Police Federation of England & Wales tell me that the results are extremely positive with just the sight of the device enough to stop offenders in their tracks. Much has been said about the alleged dangers of Taser, it does deliver a nasty shock to anyone on the receiving end, but momentary discomfort is far removed from the possible fatal results of police shootings. Oliver Sprague, Amnesty Internationals UK Arms Programme Director said in 2008:

“The Taser is clearly a dangerous weapon and should only be used in very limited circumstances where strictly necessary to protect life or avoid very serious injuries. It must be kept in the hands of a small number of highly trained specialist officers”.

He went on to say:

"We must never put dangerous electro-shock weapons like Tasers in the hands of anyone but highly trained specialist officers"

The introduction of Tasers to trained firearms officers must be seen as positive action in the interests of preventing serious injury to any of my membership as well as members of the public.

We provide officers with protective clothing, CS spray, Asp & restraints. Police Firearms officers are highly trained to ACPO level and the deployment of Taser can only be authorised in the most exceptional circumstances. To suggest my membership would abuse the use of the Taser or cannot be trusted to use them correctly in accordance with ACPO guidelines and authorities as some have suggested during this debate, is, in this Associations view quite simply offensive.

The public must get the Police service it deserves. Properly trained, properly funded and properly equipped. It is this Associations considered view that the public have not been given all the facts regarding the issue and deployment of Taser. The proposal to introduce Taser is, at this present time for firearms officers only. The bobby walking up and down King Street or standing at the weighbridge on a Friday night will not be issued with Taser. As previously mentioned, highly trained firearms officers only will

be issued with the device as a practical supplement to conventional firearms, providing the officer with the less lethal option.

The States of Jersey Police association believe that the employer has a responsibility to protect its staff, providing them with the best equipment to protect not only themselves but the public whom we serve. We whole heartedly support the proposal to introduce Taser and strongly urge politicians to do the same.

Simon Thomas
President
States of Jersey Police Association

26/04/12