

# STATES OF JERSEY

## Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel Taser Review Hearing

**FRIDAY, 27th APRIL 2012**

**Panel:**

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour (Chairman)  
Connétable M.P.S. Le Troquer of St. Martin  
Connétable S.W. Pallett of St. Brelade  
Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade (Co-opted panel member)

**Witness:**

President, Honorary Police Association  
Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police

**Also Present:**

Mr. M. Haden (Scrutiny Officer)

[12:50]

**Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour (Chairman):**

Welcome, gentlemen. Thank you for coming today to talk to us. So if I can start with an opening question. As you would be aware, we are discussing the topic of Tasers. Does the introduction of Tasers to the States of Jersey Police have any implications on the Honorary Police?

**President, Honorary Police Association:**

I think you are best answering that one, Danny.

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

It depends on what circumstances they are going to be introduced. If it is controlled circumstances, say, armed response units and specialist units using Tasers and not a general officer on the beat, then I would say no. But if it was for general officers on the beat, then I would say it would, yes. Almost certainly it is bound to because it would mean that the States of Jersey Police, quite rightly so, are better equipped than the Honorary Police, but if it was for a specialist unit, then I would say no, minimum.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Is that not currently the case though in terms of the protection that they have got in terms of CS spray and baton because it would be fair to say that the Honorary Police are not issued them either?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

No, they are not.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

I will ask you a little bit of a general question. Do you feel that you are lagging behind considering many of the duties that you carry out mirror many of the duties that the States Police do?

**President, Honorary Police Association:**

I think Danny was asking a few of the Chefs last night and that was the implication that we are running further and further behind but at what level and when do we start coming in because the problem with anything like this is that it comes down to training and it is consistent training, training going on and on, not just every 6 months, every 12 months or something like that. With the States Police being fully employed, then obviously that is their training programme. It will be very difficult for us to catch up with the situation we stand at the moment.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

There are probably 2 considerations, at least, to do with the differentiation in the resources and the equipment available. First of all, there is a public perception in that the public will perceive that there is a difference between the Honorary Police and the States Police, and secondly, from the honorary perspective as well, can you just talk about that, whether it is a helpful thing?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

Yes, it is. There is a difference, clearly. The States Police are a professional body who are paid and are highly trained. They are, and they are trained to a much higher degree than what the Honorary Police are and they are professional police. But the problem is that when you have the Honorary Police out and about and particularly in places like St. Helier and St. Brelade's and the States Police are there, we will be asked to attend the same incidents. We have a large public order incident in Liberation Square or at Churchill Park and the Honorary Police just may be first on the scene, dealing potentially with a very similar situation, a volatile public order situation. It is quite clear they should not be and could not be dealing with armed operations or anything like that, but on routine policing patrols, you could come across similar incidents, albeit they are different police forces with different training abilities, yes.

**President, Honorary Police Association:**

The biggest problem with that question is that you never know what is around the corner, do you?

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

No. What I really meant to say is which of those 2 scenarios you outlined where there is a controlled response unit or they are lower down the chain, if you like. Which of those 2 would you be more comfortable with?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

What, for the use of Tasers or ...?

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

First of all from your perspective as Honorary Police.

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

Our perception would be yes, you are dealing with response to a public order incident and that is fine but you would not be dealing with top-end armed operations and the Honorary Police would not and should not be dealing with those. That is not to say they will not provide a scene guard at a distance, and they do and they have done, but you would not have close operational activities.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

If it helps the Deputy's question, can you explain the Memorandum of Understanding of the States Police that you have in place at the moment?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

Yes. The Memorandum of Understanding is that we are detailed to attend jobs that we are capable of dealing with and all things have to be taken into consideration. The problem is, and I think Centenier Raymond raised this, is that you do not know what is around the corner and it is when you are out and about and you come across an incident of a potentially violent nature and the public perception is, whether you are honorary or States Police, you should do something about it. The control room may not send you there, but that is the public perception.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

I know it will vary for every parish but we have not received the statistics for the number of violent crimes that the States of Jersey Police were called to, and of course it will vary on the parish, but it is still an open question. I mean, you did touch on it. Are the Honorary Police finding themselves in a situation where they are having to deal with and cope with violent situations?

**President, Honorary Police Association:**

I would say that those sorts of situations are on the up but they are not colossally on the up, but the point is you can always be in danger. The biggest problem is when do you decide you step back or whether you step in and, as you rightly said, the general public perception will be: "You are police. Forget about whether it is honorary or States. You should be doing something about it." It is a very difficult question to answer on that point.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Could I just lead in there then. It is a very simple question and I know you would be able to answer it. Are honorary officers trained in the use of force at any level?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

Yes, yes.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Can you just highlight those, where the training comes in?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

The Honorary Police are trained by Mr. Fraser Bentley who is the States of Jersey Police trainer and he provides conflict management training which includes handcuffing, both passive and non-passive, using rigid-bar handcuffs, the same as the States of Jersey Police use, and including basic self-defence techniques and communication skills in dealing with the public and avoiding potentially aggressive or volatile situations. We adopt the criteria that officers should redo this course every 12 to 18 months and I believe (I may be wrong here) that is in line with what the States of Jersey Police do. Yes, they are trained. It also depends on the fitness level and age of the officer as well.

**President, Honorary Police Association:**

But just to make it clear as well, it is not mandatory.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Is it also true though that, in regards to the foundation course, communication skills are also dealt with during that training as well?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

Yes, yes. Definitely, yes. To a high degree, yes.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

You discussed how the key role then is for the Honorary Police to calm down a situation or to talk through a situation and you receive a lot of training on that. Do the Honorary Police find that an effective method or way of tackling any situations?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

Personally I would say yes, it is a mirror image of what the States of Jersey Police do. I mean, they do conflict and communication skills. It works very well. It gives you a different perspective on how to calm a situation down. It is something that we have been doing for a number of years and I would say that has had an impact. I think it does help officers to look at it from a different angle, definitely.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

You seem a bit bemused by my question, but what follows on is, if that appears to be an effective method in dealing with certain situations, whatever they are, the escalation of other things to perhaps things like Tasers, there clearly is a step up there. Certainly from the public's submissions, for certain people they feel that perhaps is a step too far given the range which the police but also in the arsenal of the Honorary Police Division too different from the things like the CS et cetera. What I am trying to ask is do you feel that perhaps if something like a Taser was available, these other skills perhaps suffer; they may not be used as rigorously?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

No. I would say if a Taser was available under controlled circumstances, for example, for specialist units within the States of Jersey Police, I would say not because clearly they would only be used under certain situations.

[13:00]

Presumably we are not talking about the average police officer on the beat having Tasers or anything like that, but for certain specialist groups, armed response units ... and I do not think that would be ... because communication skills are still needed for that as well and they have specialist negotiators. But I think under certain controlled circumstances, the Taser could be used, yes.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Do either the committee, Chef or the Honorary Police Association have any views on the introduction of Taser in terms of it being a less lethal option than firearms?

**President, Honorary Police Association:**

We have not had the opportunity. This was the problem. We are very pleased that we are here today but we have not had the opportunity to discuss it as a whole with regards to the H.P.A. (Honorary Police Association). I do not know about you, Danny, with the Chefs.

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

We have with the Chefs, yes. Not as a group but I have asked for responses and the general response went down 2 roads. First of all, it should be under controlled circumstances and specialist groups; then they would be in favour. And secondly that if it was less lethal than using a firearm, then surely it would be better to go that route. Now, clearly, people who are making these comments probably do not fully have the background on Tasers and things like that but I think the view was that people had expressed opinion that controlled circumstances, the right situation, yes, but not just free for all, so to speak.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

You may have partly answered the question already, Mr. Raymond, but do you think the level of crime and the nature of crime in Jersey as it currently stands warrants the introduction of a new device like a Taser?

**President, Honorary Police Association:**

It would be unfair for me to answer on behalf of the States Police, but on behalf of us, then I would say that I do not think it is necessary for the Honorary Police to be involved with being issued with Tasers or having a unit and I think it would be totally wrong for me to make any comment about the States Police. I think that it would be their decision. What always worries me in anything like this is who makes the decision and what group of people are going to use them, and I think in my own case with regards to the Honorary Police, without repeating it, training is such an important facet of the whole thing.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Have any of your officers been in a situation they can think of where they might have wanted to ... I know they cannot use Tasers but hypothetically where they may have been beneficial?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

Yes. I can say over the years I have been in situations and some of my colleagues have where knives have been used and things like that and there may well have been

an argument for CS spray for the Honorary Police, and they were incidents that were come across by accident. On a number of occasions, yes. Yes, it has happened.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

Is it items of personal protection that you think the Honorary Police should have, because at the moment we are talking about what, not a baton? No? Stab jacket, vest?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

Some parishes have stab vests. Most parishes, I think, have rigid-bar handcuffs and some have stab vests but not all.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

Do you think the introduction of more items of equipment leads to complaints against the police or a perception of the police being a unit set up as a military-type unit? Because the Honorary Police have changed from the perceived community officer to police car, full gear, caps, the lot. Has that made a difference to the Honorary Police? Is there 100 per cent support for that in the Honorary Police Service?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

There is not 100 per cent support, I would say, from the Chef's angle. I would say there is not, but times have changed. Many years ago, the Honorary Police did not move outside of their parish and parishioners stayed within their confines but nowadays, with mobile phones, texting, travel, people operate all over the Island and you can have incidents taking place in any parishes. It is probably fair to say that in the urban parishes, the more higher profile, uniformed-style approach is accepted but in the more rural parishes it is not quite so accepted.

**President, Honorary Police Association:**

That probably is the case. The other thing is that I think that, as time has moved on, people will respect somebody in a uniform as opposed to somebody in a suit and I think, in today's modern world, you have to command some sort of respect. The only thing that slightly worries me, following on from that question, is that I would not want to see the Taser used as a tool to stop somebody without having gone through the processes of trying to calm them down before using the Taser and I think if you start putting this into the format, then it starts to become a little worrying.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Would it be fair to say with the proliferation of more Island events and some of the changes in cross-border policing that some parishes that maybe were not at the front end now do find themselves at the front end on certain occasions and the Honorary Police need to be aware of the risks involved from all parish fronts, not just the major urban parishes?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

Yes, absolutely.

**President, Honorary Police Association:**

I could not agree more. You can take my own parish, for instance, with Jersey Live. Before Jersey Live came along Trinity hardly had any problems at all but as a major

Island event we have seen things that we probably would not have seen in the normal past.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

I will take your parish in particular; has it changed a country parish like Trinity's view of personal protection equipment and maybe some more equipment that could protect your officers?

**President, Honorary Police Association:**

Yes, in all honesty, it has because I think you are coming down where you are in a crowd of people, you know, 10,000 people and they are trying to get out of a very small entrance, then people are starting to wear protective clothing, which they would not have done, and the perception has changed. But that is only on specific events and, unfortunately, Jersey Live is the event in our parish.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

You say you charge offenders or suspects for court. Have you seen a noticeable increase in complaints made to you? People are not making formal complaints against the States Police but against police action.

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

Yes.

**President, Honorary Police Association:**

Yes.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

How would they come about? What sort of complaints? Is this bullying? Is this aggression?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

No, handcuffs are on too tight. You end up charging somebody and they are: "Look at my wrists, you slapped the handcuffs on too tight." My own view is that probably most of these do not end up in a complaint but they are more of a gripe and they will pass comments to you, as you well know.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

Are these against younger officers, or they are made to you but can it be right through the police force?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

I think it can be right through the police force, yes.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Slightly different tack. In terms of court, obviously Centeniers have got a very privileged position and they are allowed to charge and take people through the court system. Have you seen an increase over the last 2 or 3 years of serious criminal assaults and also assaults on police?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

Difficult to say. I do not think it has increased. I would say it has probably stayed about the same. Drink-related offences will often result in police officers being assaulted because they are in that type of situation: somebody has drunk an awful lot of alcohol, they object to being spoken to or arrested, and it does happen and it is pretty consistent. We found it at one point a few years ago (not recently) lots of juveniles tended to be charged with assault on police and things like that. Not recently but, you know, juveniles that have been drinking and things like that. I think it is pretty consistent. I do not know what the figures or stats would be but it has always been like that, I think, probably, even 10 or 12 years ago.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

I am just thinking in terms of the way that the States Police would approach it. Have you seen an increase in alcohol or drug-related assaults over that sort of period of time? Is it something that you have noticed going through court?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

To a certain degree, yes, but I think it has always been that way with St. Helier because of the preponderance of the large number of licensed premises and the large number of people on the streets at any one particular time. You have got a flash point; maybe there is 3,000 or 4,000 people on the street and it is always going to be there. Whether I can say it is a dramatic increase, I cannot say that is the case but there might be a slight increase.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

I will move on from that then. Would you believe that St. Helier Honorary Officers are putting themselves at higher risk than any other parish because of the type of incidents they have to deal with?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

I would say yes and no. I would say along with St. Brelade's, St. Saviour's and St. Clements, I would say they probably are, yes, but we have a select patrolling group. Not every officer would go out and do frontline patrolling. We have a select group based on training based on ability and based on age that do this and carry out this high-profile role.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Who would carry out that assessment before officers can go out on those types of patrols?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

We do it internally. I mean, these people have to be communications skill trained. They have to be handcuff trained, both passive and non-passive. They have to have done the full foundation course, full officer safety, full first aid before taking that role.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

How much contact, primarily St. Helier but generally, have you had with the firearms unit? Has there been any close contact with firearms units at any stage?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**



Over the years, I personally have been involved in a number of cordons. It is difficult to say how many but a few, outer cordons for events where we are called to close roads and stop people going through. But you are not having any direct contact probably with the police officers. In an armed operation, you will not be up close; you will be some considerable distance away, manning the outer cordon.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

On the recent very sorry incident where 6 people were murdered, how early were the Honorary Police on the scene on that particular day?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

Victoria Crescent?

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Yes.

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

Quite early. Probably within 2 hours. There was a very quick response from the Honorary Police and we had a very large number of officers on the scene fairly quickly.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

There were not any officers at the scene in terms of apprehending an offender or --

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

No, it was post the event they were there but it was not that long later. The call went through to us pretty quickly.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

May I ask what you think the biggest threat of violence and assault, either to your officers or to the States Police officers comes from? Is it from drunkenness?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

Yes, I would say that. I mean, 2 of my colleagues were assaulted in the last 2 months and both of those incidents were of a drunken nature. With those types of assaults, people who were considerably under the influence of alcohol objected to being arrested or moved on and reacted violently to the Honorary Police. I think it is same with the States Police; a large amount of it is probably drink-related.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

We have got a proposal which is a draft from the Minister for Home Affairs and part of the proposal is that Tasers can be deployed when there is a specific threat of physical violence to any person which would include a police officer, to make a Taser available, as long as it is at an appropriate level. It seems to me that if that is to be the case, it seems that it will be necessary to make Tasers available in the situations where police are most likely to be assaulted, which is on a Saturday night outside Chambers et cetera. Do you think that is true and is that a concern?

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

I think I would have concerns about that. I do not know what the States of Jersey Police would say but they do have a suitable range of equipment. They have ASPs and they have CS spray which normally can quite adequately deal with a situation like that. I do not know, I could be wrong here, but I would have thought that Tasers would have been used for more serious operations involving maybe firearms or knives and things like that and not for what I would call drunken public order offences where I would hope the officers are well enough equipped to deal with that. I can imagine the public reaction; if Tasers were used outside a nightclub, I think it would be pretty horrific.

**President, Honorary Police Association:**

That is what worries me in the sense that you are using the Taser instead of using your normal requirement of trying and defuse the situation. I just wanted to clarify one thing, Constable Pallet; over the last 2 years, I have seen a noticeable change in all the parishes following on basically from what Danny is saying and that is that the parishes are using officers what they are best attuned to do and you are not sending some of our, let us say, elderly officers and ladies out to deal with something that could be a little bit of a problem. So we are actually using people for funerals and weddings and those people do that, and it has been noticeable across all the parishes that people are doing that. So there is an awareness that there is danger out there and that we are conscious of it and that is why I just wanted to make it clear. I think in the past it was very much St. Helier and St. Brelade's but I think every parish now is fully aware that there are problems out there.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

I am just conscious of the time. Do any of the panel members have any final questions? No more questions? Okay. I always give you the opportunity; if there are any final comments you would like to make, anything that you would like to draw the panel's attention to, I would like to give you that opportunity.

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

No. Thank you.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Wonderful. Then, in that case, thank you very much for talking to us today. Just before I close, I would like to say on behalf of the panel we do hope you will communicate back to your colleagues and just thank them on the work they do for the Island. We do appreciate it is not an easy thing to do but we do appreciate the work that is done.

**Chairman, Comité des Chefs de Police:**

Thank you very much.

**President, Honorary Police Association:**

Thank you very much indeed.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Thank you very much for your time. I close the hearing and if I could ask members of the public and the media to withdraw.