

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS
BY DEPUTY G.C.L. BAUDAINS OF ST. CLEMENT**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 28th MARCH 2006

Question

Would the Minister advise -

- (a) how many M2 Brownings are currently held in the Island by individuals, and the weight of each of those guns?
- (b) whether there are any other firearms held in the Island that could bring an aircraft down and, if so, what are they?
- (c) when the concerns recently reported in the media regarding the licensing of firearms were first raised?
- (d) the date when the matter was raised with her and who briefed her?
- (e) whether she briefed the media and, if not, is she aware who did, and the reasons why States members were not notified beforehand?
- (f) what research has been undertaken, if any, into the correlation between gun crime and legitimate gun ownership in Jersey? and,
- (g) what changes, if any, will be made to current firearms legislation and how will this be achieved?

Answer

- (a) From Central Firearms Index records, there are three deactivated Browning heavy machine guns currently held in the Island; it is not known if they are the M2 version but they would look very similar. The one weapon actually held, and of concern, is a Styer bolt action rifle that fires the .50 BMG (Browning machine gun) round. The potential effects are similar; a devastating performance against light armoured vehicles at a range of a mile, and three miles in the case of unprotected targets. The Styer can in fact fire the .50 round more accurately and further than the M2 Browning. The unloaded weight of the weapon held in the island is approximately 9kg.
- (b) It is not possible to give an accurate answer. There are over 500 different types of calibre of ammunition licensed in the Island, many of which have the capability to bring down an aircraft. Whether such consequences would ensue depends upon many factors such as the size of the aircraft, the range of the firing, the impact point, the trajectory and so on.
- (c) Specific concerns about the presence of weapons such as this in the Island were raised in January 2006 to the Chief Officer, States of Jersey Police, who promptly raised this with me and the Assistant Minister. The seriousness of the concerns was recognised by all parties and a number of actions were initiated. These included the instigation of a States of Jersey Police report on the issue, (which has only just been completed), together with an internal States of Jersey Police Force Inspectorate review on local compliance with the Cullen recommendations, which were established following the Dunblane massacre. Contact was also made at this time with the Education, Sport and Culture Department which consequently commissioned a U.K. expert to inspect their shooting facilities and to report back on various issues. This report would include the suitability of local ranges for the use of high velocity firearms with a view to establishing whether or not reasons given for the possession of such weapons would be invalid, hence perhaps providing grounds for weapon deactivation and recall of ammunition. This report has yet to be completed.

At around the same time, albeit not initiated by such specific concerns, the Comité des Connétables had requested guidance from H.M. Attorney General on the implementation of the Firearms (Jersey) Law 2000. The Comité is awaiting the Attorney General's response.

- (d) The Chief Officer, States of Jersey Police, met with me and the Assistant Minister on the 25th January 2006, where actions were initiated, as detailed in (c) above.
- (e) The media were not "briefed" as such. Questions had been put to the Deputy Chief Officer, States of Jersey Police, by the Jersey Evening Post following the 10th anniversary of the Dunblane massacre, and such interest in firearms on this anniversary was not unexpected. Guided by the Freedom of Information codes introduced by the States, subsequent legal advice, and guidance from the Data Protection Registrar, following further requests for details the Deputy Chief Officer, States of Jersey Police considered he was obliged to answer the questions and provide the information which had been requested of him.

Other information was withheld on the basis that it would hamper the prevention of crime and endanger public safety, and also because it was personal data. The answer to part (c) shows that a great deal of background work was already underway owing to the seriousness of the concerns that had been raised in January, and that at the time of the press interest not all of this work was complete. As such, I was not in a position to bring the findings and recommendations before the States and would not have wanted to present the Assembly with incomplete information.

- (f) Thankfully, crime in Jersey involving real firearms is extremely rare. Owing to this, an attempt at any correlation would be very difficult and any results obtained would be statistically inconclusive.
- (g) I have initiated a review of Article 33 of the Firearms (Jersey) Law 2000, which lists weapons and ammunition which are prohibited in Jersey, in order to assess whether adding other categories of weapon and ammunition will enhance public safety.

The Firearms Law Liaison Group, under the chairmanship of the Assistant Minister, will also be reviewing whether, in the light of experience of administering the Law, there are other provisions which should be tightened up.