1. About This Procedure

1.1. This procedure has been written to provide a clear understanding of the current arrangements for the management, command and deployment of Authorised Firearms Officers (AFOs) within the Joint Operations Unit (JOU).

1.2. This procedure sets out the JOU intention to comply with the guidance set out in Authorised Professional Practice (APP) Armed Policing and should be read in conjunction with the JOU Firearms Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (STRA) and other JOU procedures outlined at the end of this document.

2. Risk Assessments / Health and Safety Considerations

2.1. Health and Safety legislation, in particular the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (and the legislation that extends this to the Police Service), the Police (Health and Safety) Regulations 1999, places an onus on the employer to carry out risk assessments and develop safe systems of work as part of an overall process to manage health and safety, both for staff and members of the public, where a duty of care is owed.

2.2. Section 33(1) (a) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 creates a single offence of failing to discharge the duties imposed by subsections 2 to 7. The relevant duty in this situation is provided by section 3(1), which states:

“It shall be the duty of every employer to conduct his undertaking in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons not in his employment who may be affected thereby are not thereby exposed to risks to their health and safety.”
2.3. The overall management of risk in relation to the deployment of armed police assets lies within a nationally defined command protocol as defined within APP (Module 5 Command). Principally, the key elements of this are:

2.3.1. Strategic Firearms Commander (SFC)
2.3.2. Tactical Firearms Commander (TFC)
2.3.3. Operational Firearms Commander (OFC)
2.3.4. Firearms Tactical Advisor (TA)

2.4. The command element responsibilities are the same in each force (Hampshire Constabulary and Thames Valley Police.)

2.5. In relation to the completion of threat and risk assessments for potential firearms deployments, this function is carried out by accredited occupationally and operationally competent TFC’s in both forces. Requests for pre-planned firearms threat assessments are passed to the duty cadre TFC or the TFC who has the working knowledge of the circumstances, having produced an earlier threat assessment that now requires review, or the individual who will be commanding the operation if it becomes a firearms deployment.

2.6. Initial or spontaneous firearms command is routinely undertaken by Force Incident Managers (Inspectors in police control rooms) based in the control rooms across Hampshire and Thames Valley. All inspectors taking on this command function are qualified TFC’s for the initial phase of deployment.

3. Procedure

3.1. Management of Armed Officers

3.1.1. Daily management of armed officers within the Joint Operations Unit (JOU) is consistent in both force areas in APP compliance. Command is collaborative with a single Primary TFC working across both forces and a secondary TFC available for support. This command structure comes under the direction of ACC Operations and is part of the JOU Firearms Senior Management Team.

3.2. Command of Armed Officers

3.2.1. The firearms command operating principles are consistent across the JOU and as defined within APP (AP) 05-007 to 05-012. Deployment of Armed Response Vehicles (ARVs) to an initial incident requiring a firearms response within the
3.2.2. The collaborated Cadre TFC Firearms Command is now fully implemented.

Hampshire Constabulary and Thames Valley Police have a collaborated Contact Management unit.

3.2.3. Hampshire Constabulary and Thames Valley Police have three Police Control Rooms (PCRs) covering the two force areas. The functions relating to firearms are primarily served from the centres at Netley, Abingdon and Milton Keynes.

3.2.4. The Police Control Rooms are operationally managed by a police inspector known as the Force Incident Manager (FIM).

3.2.5. Routinely, most initial firearms deployments are commander by the FIM who is trained and accredited as a TFC (initial only).

3.2.6. In the majority of cases, having completed an assessment and where necessary, deployed armed assets, the transfer of command will formally hand over to the duty Firearms Cadre.

3.2.7. The Transfer of Command may not always take place and in accordance with APP, will depend on the ability to undertake the full command functions. The FIM may retain command with oversight from the cadre TFC for continued professional development.

3.2.8. Firearms tactical advice is provided through a combination of ARV, Firearms Training and CTSFO (Counter Terrorist Specialist Firearms Officer) officers of both the rank of Constable and sergeant. Provision is through a combination of on duty and callout arrangements.

JOU Dedicated Cadre

3.2.9. The dedicated Firearms Cadre consists of eight officers at Chief Inspector Rank from both Hampshire Constabulary and Thames Valley Police. All officers on this team are TFCs accredited for both initial and planned firearms command and deal with the majority of TFC demands for both forces. The
Firearms Cadre are responsible for planned firearms threat assessments and provide on duty cover between 0700 and 0200 each day. At all other times, they operate a callout system.

3.2.10. The duty cadre TFC will undertake a transfer of command from the FIM on initial firearms deployments as soon as practicable and in a position to do so.

3.2.11. A secondary TFC cadre officer of at least the rank of Inspector will also be on duty to provide further resilience to the primary cadre, in the event of additional firearms deployments being required to other.

3.2.12. The Operational Firearms Command (OFC) role is performed at both Constable and Sergeant Rank and within the Armed Response Team (ARV) and Specialist Firearms Officer team (SFO). At all times, at least one OFC is on duty in both Hampshire and ThamesValley.

3.3. Accreditation

3.3.1. Chief Officers must ensure that arrangements exist whereby appropriately selected, trained, assessed and accredited commanders and tactical advisors are available to command and advise on situations in which AFOs have been deployed (APP (AP) 05-002.)

3.4. Deployment of Firearms Officers

3.4.1. Authorised Firearms Officers (AFO) are considered as being deployed when they are required to conduct a specific task during which the possession of a firearm, with appropriate authorisation, is a required element. This includes when they self-deploy.

3.4.2. The JOU has the minimum resource commitment of 12 double crewed armed response vehicles (ARVs) across the two force areas between the hours of 0700 and 0200, Monday to Thursday and to 0300hrs Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

3.4.3. Outside of these hours, on designated days of the week, the minimum number of ARVs on duty will be five.

3.4.4. The patrol areas for ARVs are defined by the demand profile for Firearms and Taser incidents along with the threat, risk
and deterrence required by armed assets; which is summarised within the STRA.

3.4.5. In addition an ARV / Roads Policing vehicle will be on duty on the Isle of Wight between the hours of 0700 and 0200hrs. ARV coverage outside of these hours and in order to support will be provided from across the JOU.

3.4.6. ARVs should be deployed to initial incidents requiring a firearms response in sufficient numbers to effectively deal with the threat. This should be in pairs as a minimum. However, this would not prevent the deployment of a single ARV where there is an immediate threat to life. Every effort should be made to provide additional armed support as deemed appropriate by the TFC and subsequently the SFC following TA advice.

3.4.7. Specialist Firearms Officer (SFO) and Counter Terrorist Specialist Firearms Officer (CTSFO) provision is provided across the JOU through a combination of on-duty and callout arrangements. At all times, a minimum of 11 CTSFOs/SFOs (including an OFC) are available on callout basis.

3.4.8. Where armed officers encounter a situation where they believe that the criteria for deployment of AFOs has been met, and delay in seeking authority to deploy would be detrimental to public or officer safety, officers should deploy and take the necessary and proportionate action in accordance with their training.

3.4.9. In accordance with APP; where self-deployment occurs, the AFOs should inform the police control room as soon as practicable so that a TFC can be informed. The TFC should then assess and review the actions of the AFO in line with the National Decision Model (NDM) and determine whether continued deployment is appropriate. The TFC should also consider what further resources may be required and inform an SFC as soon as practicable.

3.4.10. The ACC Operations for the JOU has authorised a Standing Arming Authority for the carriage of side arms by officers performing ARV duties. Such authorisation is subject to annual review.

3.4.11. In all cases where AFOs have been deployed, commanders must regularly review the need for their continued deployment.
3.4.12. Armed support to covert operations, when performed by covert AFOs, falls into three main categories and in all cases will be in compliance with national advice around training and equipment provision:

a. Armed Surveillance  
b. Mobile Armed Support to Surveillance (MASTS)  
c. Operations to Counter Threats to Life

3.4.13. The JOU operates a number of standing authorities for the issue and carriage of firearms for Close Protection, Static Protection or Counter Terrorist purposes. In each case, the standing authority is subject to regular review and renewal by the ACPO firearms lead.

3.5. Authority Levels for Specialist Munitions

3.5.1. There are different levels of authority required for the deployment of specialist munitions to those required for the deployment of traditional firearms. The key specialist munitions likely to be used in policing operations are:

a. Pyrotechnics (distraction devices)  
b. Smoke  
c. Rifle  
d. Explosive Method of Entry (EMOE)  
e. Shotgun (Hatton)

3.5.2. The following explains what tier of firearms command can authorise these forms of specialist munitions:

Initial

a. TFC can authorise the use of pyrotechnics to support of Emergency Search. Self-deployment can take place where necessary but notification must be made to a TFC as soon as practicable (i.e. in an Active Shooter incident).

b. TFC can authorise smoke to support AFO movement/fire and movement. Self-deployment can take place where necessary but notification must be made to a TFC as soon as practicable (i.e. in an Active Shooter incident).

c. TFC can authorise use of rifle trained officers for immediate animal dispatch, although this function can also be performed by ARV officers
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d. SFC must authorise use of rifle officers if needed to support an initial deployment.
e. SFC must authorise use of an EMOE tactic if required to support an initial deployment.

Planned

f. SFC must authorise all conventional and specialist weapons/munitions to support a planned firearms deployment.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1. This procedure applies to:

4.1.1. Strategic Firearms Commanders
4.1.2. Tactical Firearms Commanders
4.1.3. Operational Firearms Commanders
4.1.4. Tactical Advisors
4.1.5. All JOU AFOs

5. Administration

5.1. See above procedure.

6. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

6.1. This procedure will be reviewed annually by the Chief Inspector Tactical Firearms to ensure that it is fit for purpose and reflects any changes in national/local guidance and legislation. This version of the procedure has been approved and authorised by the ACC lead for firearms. Any amendments will be recorded and auditable through version control, through the Policy Manager in Hampshire Constabulary.

7. Other Related Procedures, Policies and Information Source

7.1. 33301 Procedure JOU Tactical Firearms Team Training
7.2. 33303 Procedure JOU Tactical Firearms Team Armouries
7.3. 33305 Procedure JOU Tactical Firearms Team TFT Procedure
7.4. 33307 Procedure JOU Armed Response Vehicle

7.5. AD203 Equality Impact Assessment

**Origin:** Firearms