

# Police Service of Northern Ireland

HQ Ref: SOB 01/2007

PD 04/07

## POLICY DIRECTIVE

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### PSNI POLICY FOR SPECIALIST OPERATIONS BRANCH

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#### 1. POLICY IDENTIFICATION

**POLICY TITLE:** PSNI Policy for Specialist Operations Branch

**POLICY OWNERSHIP:**

**DEPARTMENT  
BRANCH  
AUTHOR**

**Crime Operations  
C4 Specialist Operations Branch**

**POLICY APPROVED BY:**

**CCF REF/OTHER  
DATE OF APPROVAL**

**ACC Harris**

**IMPLEMENTATION DATE:** 1 September 2006

**DATE OF ISSUE:** 1 March 2007

**DATE VERSION 3 ISSUED:** 16 April 2009

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INDEX

**SECTIONS 1- 6 FOR PUBLIC DISCLOSURE**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Policy Identification Page</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Policy Statements</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
3(1)	Executive Summary	4
3(2)	Background	4
3(3)	Aim	4
3(4)	Contribution	5
3(5)	Application	5
3(6)	Legal Basis	5
<b>4</b>	<b>Implications of the Policy</b>	<b>6</b>
4(1)	Risks	6
4(2)	Bureaucracy	6
4(3)	Consultation	6
<b>5</b>	<b>Human Rights/Equality/Integrity/Freedom of Information</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Review</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Cancellations</b>	<b>7</b>

## 2. POLICY STATEMENT

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) is committed to providing a professional and effective service to the community. This Policy statement outlines how Specialist Operations Branch (SOB) provides specialist assistance in investigations, which involve:

- (1) Serious and organised crime; or
- (2) Matters affecting national security; or
- (3) Any other issues requiring the specialist knowledge or support of SOB.

## 3. INTRODUCTION

### (1) Executive Summary

This Policy provides instructions as to the high standards of practice required by SOB in relation to covert investigations and the deployment of Covert Operational Management, Specialist Surveillance (level 1 Dedicated), Firearms Tactical Advisers (FTA), Special Firearms Officers (SFO), Technical Support, Air Support and Automatic Number Plate Recognition systems (ANPR).

### (2) Background

PSNI recognise that the environment within which Specialist Surveillance (level 1 Dedicated) Officers and SFO work in Northern Ireland is significantly different from most other parts of the UK. The PSNI are a routinely armed Service, as opposed to many other UK Police Services that are not. As such, selection and training for the role in Northern Ireland is a much more rigorous process.

### (3) Aim

- (a) SOB provides the PSNI with specially trained and dedicated police officers with skills, experience and knowledge to combat serious crime and matters that affect national security. SOB will recruit and train personnel in key areas of:
  - (i) Covert Operational Management;
  - (ii) Specialist Surveillance (level 1 Dedicated);
  - (iii) Firearms Tactical Advisers (FTA);
  - (iv) Special Firearms Officers (SFO);
  - (v) Technical Support (TSU);
  - (vi) Air Support (ASU);
  - (vii) Automatic Number Plate Recognition systems (ANPR) Policy Directive 01/08 - PSNI ANPR Systems refers.
- (b) SOB will strive to prevent and detect crime, arrest offenders and reduce crime overall.
- (c) It is our statement of intent to comply with The ACPO Manual of Guidance on the Use and Management of Specialist Surveillance Techniques March 2008 and The ACPO Manual of Guidance on Police Use of Firearms in as far as is reasonably practicable having due regard to the specific difficulties encountered with covert policing within Northern Ireland, and the Civil Aviation Authority CAP612 Police Air Operations Manual Parts 1 and 2.

**(4) Contribution**

This Policy contributes to the achievement of the Chief Constable's Vision Statement and ongoing policing objectives:

- (a) To prevent and reduce crime;
- (b) To improve crime investigation;
- (c) To improve effectiveness and efficiency.

**(5) Application**

This Policy is aimed at SOB operational resources, and also provides information to all PSNI personnel on how to access SOB resources.

**(6) Legal Basis**

Listed below are the main Acts and documents considered when developing guidelines:

- (a) ACPO Manual of Guidance on the Use and Management of Specialist Surveillance Techniques March 2008; (The ACPO Manual of Guidance on the Use and Management of Specialist Surveillance Techniques March 2008 sets out the standard to be adopted by all Police Services in the United Kingdom);
- (b) ACPO Manual of Guidance on Police Use of Firearms; (The ACPO Manual of Guidance on Police Use of Firearms sets out the standard to be adopted by all Police Services in the United Kingdom);
- (c) Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and Police Act 1997;
- (d) Human Rights Act 1998;
- (e) Data Protection Act 1998;
- (f) Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996;
- (g) Criminal Justice Act 2003;
- (h) Health and Safety at Work Act (Northern Ireland) Order 1978;
- (i) Police (Health and Safety) (Northern Ireland) Order 1997;
- (j) Intelligence Services Act 1994;
- (k) Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007.
- (l) Freedom of Information Act 2002.

With other legislation being taken into consideration as appropriate.

**4. IMPLICATIONS OF THE POLICY**

**(1) Risks**

- (a) Lack of policy could impact on public confidence in the PSNI and expose SOB covert investigations and operational methodology to scrutiny in open court.
- (b) Failure to comply with this Policy could affect the perception of, and the ability of the PSNI and in particular SOB to carry out its functions effectively, impartially and professionally.

**(2) Bureaucracy**

This Policy will reinforce procedures to be complied with by all operational resources within SOB. This is normal practice and therefore should not lead to an increase in administration, but ensure that there is an auditable process for all actions.

**(3) Consultation**

Consultation has taken place with the following:

- (a) PSNI Senior Management;
- (b) Human Rights Legal Adviser;
- (c) ACPO Surveillance Working Group;
- (d) Policy, Planning and Performance Unit;
- (e) C3 Intelligence Branch;
- (f) PSNI Health and Safety Branch;
- (g) PSNI Psychologist;
- (h) District Commander 'H' District;
- (i) Crime Manager 'H' District;
- (j) Specialist Operations Branch Operations Centre;
- (k) Specialist Operations Branch Air Support Unit;
- (l) Specialist Operations Branch Technical Support Unit;
- (m) Specialist Operations Branch Level 1 Dedicated Surveillance;
- (n) Specialist Operations Branch Headquarters Mobile Support Unit

**5. HUMAN RIGHTS/EQUALITY/INTEGRITY/FREEDOM OF INFORMATION**

- (1) This Policy is deemed to be Human Rights compliant.
- (2) It has been screened for Section 75 considerations and meets integrity standards and the PSNI's Code of Ethics. Sections 1 – 6 are suitable for publication under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The index and Section 7 (Procedures and Guidance) of this Policy will not be made public.

**6. REVIEW**

- (1) This Policy will be reviewed in 12 months.
- (2) Interim reviews may also be prompted by feedback, challenge or change in legislation.
- (3) Feedback or queries relating to this Policy should be addressed to Head of Branch, Specialist Operations Branch.

**7. CANCELLATIONS**

The following Service Procedures are hereby cancelled:

- (1) Service Procedure No 11/99 – Care and Use of Image Intensified Viewing Devices;
- (2) Service Procedure No 1/07 – Special Operations Branch C4 Headquarters Mobile Support Unit (HMSU);
- (3) Service Procedure No 4/07 – PSNI Air Support Unit – Deployment and Tasking of Aircraft for Police Purposes;
- (4) Service Procedure No 62/07 – Crime Teams.